THE BEST FRENCH SHORT STORIES OF 1923-24

And the

Yearbook of the French Short Story

Edited by

Richard Eaton

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THE BEST FRENCH SHORT STORIES OF 1923–24

BY RICHARD EATON

MUSTAPHA KEMAL
UNDER THE RED FLAG
PIONNIERS OU DÉMENTS
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THE BEST FRENCH SHORT STORIES OF 1923-24

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YEARBOOK OF THE FRENCH SHORT STORY

EDITED BY

RICHARD EATON

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AUX BELLES LETTRES FRANÇAISES

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I shall be grateful to my readers for corrections and particularly for suggestions leading to the wider usefulness of these annual volumes. In particular, I shall welcome the receipt from authors, editors, and publishers, of stories printed during the period between June, 1923, and June, 1924, inclusive, which have qualities of distinction and yet are not printed in periodicals which would ordinarily come to my attention. Such communications should be addressed to me "Care of the Service des Accrédités, Crédit Lyonnais, Boulevard des Italiens, 19, Paris, France."

R. E.

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PREFACE

Tous les genres sont bons hors le genre ennuyeux (everything is good if it is not tiresome), said Boileau, the great French classical poet. If, however, one were to apply this statement to the selection of the Best French Stories of 1923–24, their number would fill several volumes. It is obviously impossible, on the other hand, to judge the French *conte* or *nouvelle** by the American short story. There are certain types of French *contes* such as those of Daudet and De Maupassant which conform more or less to our definition of the good short story. On the contrary, there are others whose merit is undeniable when judged by French literary standards and yet whose contents most foreign readers would find almost devoid of interest, mere neurasthenic reflections. Again, the *feuilleton* (storiette) of two or three book pages has attained a literary perfection in France which compels its consideration in any anthology of French short stories. Since, however, my selection is destined primarily for the Anglo-Saxon public, it is apparent that my choice of short stories must be necessarily limited by British and American literary standards. I have therefore adopted the following method of selection. Each story which I have considered seriously for inclusion in this collection has been classified according to its merit respectively in France and in America. The stories have been graded on a basis of seventy-five per cent for literary value in France and twenty-five per cent for conformity with the principles of the American short story.

Thus, for example, *The Fear of Being Useless,* by the Countess of Noailles, is of undeniable worth in France, but if a translation were to be submitted to an American magazine editor, well aware of the tastes of his public, it is doubtful if he would find it "in accordance with the policies of his publication." The same is true of *The Miracle* by

* *Conte* literally tale: *Nouvelle* literally novelette: *Feuilleton* storiette and even *roman,* novel are used interchangeably to denote short story, for which there is no French equivalent.

Georges Duhamel, although to a lesser degree. Also, *Monsieur Maurice* by Colette (Mme. Henry de Jouvenel) is considered a perfect example of the *feuilleton* by reason of its style, purity of language, and conciseness of plot. Yet it can hardly be called a short story because of its length. *The Fear of Being Useless, Monsieur Maurice,* and *The Miracle,* however, have been been included in this volume because of their high percentage according to French standards.

This does not imply, however, that all French *contes* or *nouvelles* differ from American short stories. The large number of French stories published in the American magazines is the proof. The *contes* of Bourget, Farrere, Boulenger, Lechartier, MacOrlan and Guitet Vauquelin would, in the opinion of the editor, enjoy an equal success in the United States or England.

The development of the French *conte* and *nouvelle* during the past fifty years, notwithstanding their diversity of form, bears a striking resemblance to the history of the American short story. Previous to the war, there existed in both countries, two types of short story writers. The first class included those whose work was often highly successful and of even a certain literary value but whose popularity was only momentary. The second and less numerous class was that of the true artists whose stories were a real contribution to the literature of the period. Since the war, however, both in France and in America there has been a revolt against the tradition of the old school whose form and style were fixed arbitrarily by long established rules of composition. In opposition to those authors who strove for literary perfection according to the old traditions, there has arisen a new school which seeks to attain the same result by the imagery of words as, for example, Van Vechten and Firbanks. In France the impressionistic revolt is more clearly defined, since the traditions of the *anciens* were more firmly established. *The Empty Bag,* by Drieu La Rochelle, which was pronounced by Paul Morand as the best short story of the year, is an excellent example of this new technique.

There are authors whose short stories do not fall into

any one of the three classes which I have mentioned. *The Prelude,* by Paul Geraldy, by virtue of its extreme sentimentality belongs rather to the first class of popular short stories, but the vocabulary and construction of the *roman* indicate that Geraldy will enjoy more than an ephemeral popularity.

The difficulties in the compilation of this anthology have been many: I have been obliged to omit through lack of space three stories of singular merit by Henry Bordeaux, Ernest Perochon, and Pierre Mille. The question of translation has not been easy to solve nor has that of authors' permissions. I am deeply indebted to my French colleagues for their great courtesy in this respect and most particularly to M. Paul Morand, whose aid was invaluable.

R. E.

THE BEST FRENCH SHORT STORIES OF 1923–24

NOTE.—The order in which the stories in this volume are printed is not intended as an indication of their comparative excellence; the arrangement is alphabetical by authors.

THE PRODIGAL CHILD

By MARCEL BOULENGER

(From *Les Œuvres Libres*)

I

"I DON'T understand why you are so fond of this big boy!"

The speaker was young Olivier Sibourt, the novelist. He was talking to Marcelle Pirenne, a "chicken," as one said in nineteen hundred and twenty-three, and the pair were chatting together in the Casino at Deauville, before dinner.

"Now, please don't put yourself out for me, I beg of you!" retorted Marcelle, with an affected air.

And as she was annoyed, she pretended to be looking in the other direction, while tugging nervously at her pearls.

This did not disturb Olivier in the least. He was getting rid at Deauville, without much difficulty, of the money he had received in the form of a literature prize, and he had become rather the tame cat of "that curious girl Marcelle." He was studying her with passionate attention. As a writer of psychological novels, he allowed nothing to escape him, and he was determined nothing should escape him. "It is a matter of professional duty," he said.

Suddenly, however, Marcelle began to laugh.

"When you have finished, when you have *quite* finished running Gerard down," she said, "I shall have a piece of good advice to give you, and it is this: try and be as pleasing as he is, and that will calm you."

The phrase was well chosen, for Olivier Sibourt immediately became all honey and milk and spitefulness, in order to retort, in his sweetest tones:

"Oh, so far as I am concerned, Marcelle, I cannot make any claim to be pleasing, and especially to please you in the way your wonderful Gerard adopts! He has a complexion like your own. Oh, no—nothing doing in that way for

me! Gerard is handsome, Gerard is delightful, Gerard is distinguished . . ."

"Yes, that you can say, for he certainly is distinguished!"

"And I have said it. I am not going to deny his merits, even if he is making me nearly burst with jealousy. A French novelist is nothing if not chivalrous, my dear! That does not alter the fact, however, that your Gerard is nothing, morally speaking, but a great hulking boy!"

Such obstinacy was sufficient to give Marcelle a nervous crisis or, as they used to say, the vapours. Moreover, that phrase "morally speaking" . . . .

"Morally speaking!" she cried. "What do you mean by that? Good heavens, how pretentious these literary people are! There is no 'morally speaking' in the matter. A Gerard Lavergne, my child, with the manners and breeding that he has—no, you will never succeed in depreciating a man of that kind! If he were what you say he is, moreover, it would show itself. He would give himself away, if only by exhibiting—oh, how can I make an innocent like you understand?—well, by showing a little bad temper or middle-class sulkiness if he is crossed—as you would do, my friend! As a matter of fact, he does nothing of the kind, as you must have observed. You know what his manner is—that matter of sending to no matter whom no matter what insolence, even if the no matter whom were the Pope himself, with his Swiss Guards and cardinals. . . . It is sufficient for him to go into a restaurant, and there is no longer anybody else there—nobody receives any attention but him. Ah, he knows how to secure all that he wants—and with a smile, too! for nobody could be more polite than he to the waiters and the people in the cloakroom. It is only his equals that he treats like the dirt under his feet—and the women . . ."

"Even you?"

"Even me! And I never mind if he does, I can assure you. I will tell you a little secret, *mon ami,* which you can put in one of your books. When Gerard snubs me I don't feel in the least hurt, because I look upon him as so much above everybody else. I think he behaves like a prince!"

"Marcelle, listen! I tell you again that M. le Comte

Lavergne is, at the bottom, nothing but a great big boy—a johnny, if you like!"

Discouraged by the silliness of Olivier's remark—for he passed as a rule as a man of wit—and exasperated by his ridiculous obstinacy and childish jealousy, Marcelle dropped the subject. Abruptly changing the conversation, she remarked, in the colourless tones of a lady making an afternoon call:

"Were there many people at the races today? I had such a headache, I could not go out."

"Like myself, dear lady—I stayed in my room and wept."

"Wept?"

"Of course—owing to Marcelle Pirenne, who has poisoned life for me . . ."

The jesting ceased suddenly, however. Marcelle looked disturbed and reddened. The "great big boy" had appeared at the door at the other end of the Casino. He was a handsome fellow, slim and very well turned out, and certainly not over thirty. His nose and his general bearing recalled the stage marquis. He shrilled curiously in speaking, and appeared to be always on the point of ordering his servant to "inform the President's wife not to wait for me, as I shall be taking supper with His Majesty."

He wore his evening clothes as if they had been moulded on him. A man friend and two women, not less loaded with pearls than Marcelle, followed him rather than accompanied him. In a few moments he would be shouting orders to them "off stage."

Olivier Sibourt was certainly mistaken. Count Gerard Lavergne displayed a gentlemanly ease and plenty of poise; he was evidently quite the reverse of a simpleton or a "johnny."

Marcelle Pirenne, who was to dine with her Gerard, rose as if she had been moved by a spring and barely found time to say a word to Sibourt before leaving him.

Soup had not been served before Gerard began teasing her.

"And your author, Marcelle? You still love him? She's mad about him, you know!" he jokingly explained to the others.

The charming girl threw a look at him that was full of passion and softly murmured, in the form of the tenderest of reproaches:

"Idiot!"

"Possibly, by Jove!" retorted Gerard, "but I swear I did not intend it. Now those writing fellows, like Sibourt, you know, if they ever say a silly thing they do it on purpose, which is much more serious."

And Marcelle sat filled with admiration at a remark which she regarded as replete with knowledge and wisdom.

II

Before the first course, however, an incident occurred.

On this particular evening Gerard fairly sparkled; that is to say, he talked a good deal, always from the top of his head but with a certain amount of continuity, and he completed most of his sentences. Whenever a man of fashion does as much, he dazzles people.

The three women listened almost respectfully, the orchestra below poured out its melancholy strains, and the young Count Lavergne scattered without counting them the treasures of his scornful experience.

"The Royal Highnesses?" he repeated. "No, I have no Royal Highnesses on my list of acquaintances. I don't care for them. . . . You see, *mes enfants chéries,* one must really have been very badly brought up in order to please a woman who wears a crown, or who some day may wear one. Everybody is so very proper with these unfortunate people. When they meet a cad, it is a change for them and it gives them a chance to relax. Now if I am expected to play the cad . . ."

"Ah," exclaimed the ladies, "I understand! A Gerard Lavergne . . . with such manners . . . it would be a pity . . ."

"You could not, either, and for the same reason, come down to the level of the boys who are taken up by the elderly women nowadays," said Marcelle. "These objectionable young fellows have positively no education, or if they have ever had any they have certainly forgotten it.

They talk as though they were in the barrack-room, and then, to finish with, they borrow fifty francs from you, to put on a horse, for which they tell you they have been given a good tip!"

"And a bad one at that! Who would be likely to give such young cubs a tip that was worth having? As a matter of fact most of them would sooner fall down dead than go to the races. Most of them stay in their rooms, touching up their faces before the glass!"

Here, again, however, Gerard had to put in his word, as a man who knew society inside and out, down to its most secret manifestations. In what he had to say he threw as much of contempt as of good nature, which is the mixture most appreciated in the great clubs, the great bars and the *grands salons*.

"What can you expect nowadays," he remarked—or rather cried, since he would have regarded himself as discredited if he had seemed to think for one moment that he was not as absolutely alone with his friends in the restaurant as if he had been on a deserted island—"well, what can you expect, when everybody knows that bachelor flats have become too expensive to live in, and are even at that unobtainable? One is never sure now of finding a room free even at a hotel, and one has to wait. . . . Then what are these poor youngsters to do when they find a woman has fallen in love with them? I remember that, before the war, we——"

"You were only twenty, darling, in 1914!"

"I first fell in love in 1900, the year of the exhibition. She was a nursemaid, and I was in my seventh year."

"Disgusting!"

But at that moment the *maître d'hôtel* appeared, bringing a telegram on a plate.

"*Monsieur le Comte,* the *chasseur* from the Normandy has just brought this."

"A telegram? Why didn't they give it to me when I left the hotel?"

"The boy says they have been looking for *Monsieur le Comte* everywhere."

"But I was in the bar! It was not very difficult to find

me. Well, no matter. . . . Ladies, will you allow me?"

And he opened the telegram. He became a trifle pale.

"What is it?" inquired Marcelle anxiously. "Nothing serious, I hope? It seems rather a long telegram, though."

"Oh, it's nothing—nothing. Let us feed."

Before ten minutes had passed, however, Gerard's pallor had increased, and he rose from the table.

"Will you please excuse me?" he asked. "I am a little upset. Go on with your dinners, all the same. . . . I'll stroll round in the fresh air for a few minutes, to pull myself together. . . . I'll be back very shortly."

Nevertheless, he did not return, nor had he the least intention of doing so, as was shown by the fact that, as he left the restaurant, he murmured to the *maître d'hôtel:*

"Tell them at my table, when they ask for the bill, that everything has been paid, and that I have seen to everything."

He walked for a long distance along the front and round the harbour where the yachts were lying, and then went back to the Normandy, where he began an endless promenade around his room.

Suddenly the telephone bell rang.

"Hullo . . . Madame Pirenne is here, in the hall, and is asking if Monsieur is ill, and if he is in want of anything . . ."

"No, no. Tell Madame Pirenne that I will see her in an hour from now in the Casino."

Gerard Lavergne did not go near the gambling table that night, however, but, on the contrary, went immediately to bed. He did not fall asleep until over an hour afterwards.

The telegram he had received contained these words:

> "Your mother is dying, and wants you to come to her bedside in the Chateau St. Genest, on the Lille road, at Roubaix. Come at once if you wish to see her alive. Will telephone to you tomorrow morning at eight.
>
> *Abbé Meunynck.*

III

There is, if it doesn't rain, one charming hour at Deauville—the hour when the infant sun appears, after the ghastly dawn, after that artful compromise between day and night and its chilly moments. If Aurora has rosy fingers, as they say, it must be because of the cold.

But once the sun has taken its completely round form, all the birds begin to sing on all the branches in all the gardens. They vocalise, they sing themselves hoarse, the whole firmament is nothing but sonorous crystal, silver which breaks up into little pieces and pearls that vanish away.

Now this daily anthem of the birds which breaks in delirious joy over Deauville is magnificently ignored by everybody. If a few belated night-birds should, as a matter of fact, be observed making their way homewards towards four in the morning, they have either been drinking or they have just left the gambling tables and are reckoning up their winnings or their losses. In the town, at the Normandy, everywhere people are either going to bed or have gone to sleep long ago. If some craft is putting out to sea, it must be a fishing boat, in which case the crew are thinking more about fish than sparrows.

On this particular morning, however, there was one man who heard this deafening concert without missing a note of it: this was Gerard Lavergne, whom dawn found already awake. He was, in truth, tortured by the mysterious telegram he had received. His mother was dying! . . . But what mother?

Gerard had always believed himself to be an orphan. In his childhood he had been told that he no longer had a mother, that she had died when he was born. He had now and then asked to see a portrait of her, or some kind of photograph, but the reply, given with some embarrassment, had always been that there were none, that "Madame la Comtesse" had left nothing behind her.

He had never known anything but nurses, then governesses, then an abbé. Very regularly all of them had, at first ordered him, and afterwards advised him to pray for

the eternal salvation of her to whom he owed his being. The abbé, in particular, had hardly been more precise than this. Nobody had ever told him anything plain and definite, and to merest questions he had received only vague and evasive phrases in reply.

When he was fifteen, however, he thought he had discovered the secret of his birth. His father, Count Lavergne, whose embarrassment was equal to the gravity of the occasion, had on one occasion sent for him: "My boy," said this important personage, a member of several clubs, "my dear child, come and sit near me. I have something serious to say to you."

From this Gerard understood that his father wished to talk to him of Longchamp, and of Auteuil, and of the vicissitudes of his racing stable, as he had never failed to do on every occasion when he assumed the serious face he now wore. This time, however, the subject to be discussed was of quite another character.

"You are now a big boy," Count Lavergne had gone on, "and there is a secret that I ought no longer to hide from you. I have not often spoken to you of your mother. It is a subject that embarrasses me very much. Now . . . in a phrase, Gerard, my boy, you are my son, and you were regularly and legally recognised as such at your birth, but . . . I was never married to your mother. . . . She was a woman . . . how shall I say it? . . . Well, let us say that she was one to whom I could not think of giving my name. She did not belong to a family or to a social rank that would have been admitted to our own circle. . . . I took charge of you and brought you up. I have done my best for you. I think I have done my duty towards you. . . . Understand me well, my child: you are legitimately entitled to call yourself Lavergne, and you are not what is called a bastard, or the child of an adulterer. You were born outside of marriage, and that is all."

The lad for a moment had made no reply. Astounded and also horribly confused, he recognised that what he had been told suddenly made many mysteries clear to him. Emotion, however, left him silent. As soon as he recovered his voice, nevertheless, he had asked, almost in tears:

"Is she really dead . . . my mother?"

"Yes, my boy—she died when you were born."

Now Gerard had very distinctly remarked at the time that when his father told him this he had not added: "Alas!" This it is usual to do in such circumstances; it may be said to be the rule, and heaven knows the late Count Lavergne was a man who always observed the rules, and who would have committed suicide rather than fail to do what was the right thing to do.

Gerard remembered with wonderful clearness, further, that this man of tradition, this scrupulous man of the world had also said to him:

"I am speaking to you today, *mon petit*, as if you were already a man. You will thank me for it by trying to make yourself thoroughly understand me, and to reflect on what I am going to say to you as if you had already reached your majority. Do not forget—never forget that if the world——"

(Have you ever heard some honest and worthy country priest teaching the village children the catechism, and pronouncing in the course of his remarks the phrase: "Our Holy Father the Pope"? It was exactly in the same tone of awe that the late Count Lavergne made use of those two words "the world.")

"Never forget that if the world begins to hawk about everywhere that you are a natural child, although fully and perfectly recognised by your father, in due legal form, you will be done for! yes—done for! . . . You will not be allowed to enter any club, or if you do people will look very queerly at you. You will be kept out of all the salons. We will say nothing of marriage: the newly rich themselves would pounce on you for this unforgivable fault, as they would describe it. Not even the American women would have anything to do with you. All that would be left for you would be to marry some girl that nobody ever heard of. . . . It is known, of course, or at any rate there are some people who know that I have never been married; nevertheless, you were born a good many years ago, and I have maintained a strict silence on the subject. You are being educated at St. George's, where the priests are very

good to you and where you are meeting comrades who belong to the best families. You have a well-known name, and I hope you will get into St. Cyr and that you will make a good officer, a good horseman. Your career is therefore perfectly assured. But if it gets about that you are a natural son, born outside of marriage, my boy, it will finish both you and your career. For the world is like that!"

"It is very ill-natured!" the poor lad had sighed.

"There is nothing to do except submit to the world's decrees, or leave it . . . and I don't suppose you wish to leave it?"

The physiognomy of Count Lavergne, when he said this, had expressed such horror and such grief, that young Gerard, really filled with dread, had responded: "Oh, no, Father!" in a tone similar to that employed by the early martyrs when they proclaimed before the lions in the circus: "I am a Christian!"

"Very well," replied the relieved father; "in that case keep your secret—or rather, our secret—from and against everybody. So far as the whole universe is concerned, you are the son of the Count and of the Countess Lavergne, who unfortunately died when you were born. Now, is that well understood?"

"Yes, papa!"

"And if anybody should look at you rather curiously, you will appear not to notice anything, in order to avoid any kind of scandal, or else, if he is of your own age, you will smack his face!"

"Yes, papa!"

"Provided, of course, that he belongs to your own rank in society!"

That scene, which was unforgettable for Gerard, had taken place on June 16, 1909, and since then there had not been a word, not a sign, nothing. Count Lavergne had never made the least allusion to the matter, or pronounced a single syllable to his son in regard to his unknown mother who was asserted to have died fifteen years before the conversation referred to had taken place.

Gerard feared and respected his father, whose skill, or rather science in regard to horses and racing had rendered

him famous even in St. George's School. One solitary interview between them on a subject as difficult and as embarrassing as that of a birth "outside marriage" had proved sufficient for both father and son. It was not repeated. The one like the other feared all unnecessary effort, and even any effort.

Subsequently Gerard took his bachelor's degree, more or less successfully, and in spite of more than one failure; and then the ladies of the café concerts began to quarrel over him.

Afterwards he lost his father and ran up some enormous debts, thanks to the midnight suppers which he gave, the pearl necklaces which he bought for his little friends and the polo ponies for himself. Women bearing the names of perfumes or slow waltzes at this time engarlanded his days and his nights.

Finally, he was appointed to a hussar regiment, for the purpose of accomplishing his military service, and there he was when the war broke out in 1914.

Today he was regarded as an accomplished ladies' man; a roué gifted with wonderful assurance, the kindly disposed called him, while people who were envious of his good fortune denounced his "intolerable insolence." The ladies tenderly confessed that he was "exquisitely impertinent."

As year after year rolled on, however, Gerard realised more keenly than ever the truly capital importance of the secret that his father had one day risked partially revealing to him. As he was young and almost irresistible—or at least, which comes to the same thing, was reputed to be by all who lived and had their being between the Pavilion d'Armenonville, the Trocadéro, St. Clotilde and the Madeleine—an extraordinary number of envious people developed hatred and contempt for him. How delighted most of these would have been to be able, had they known it, to throw at his head the fact of his irregular birth! People in society hold thus in reserve terrible poison gases and gas bombs, which they use unmercifully, although they injure only people of their own class; and they use them with the recklessness of an artilleryman who has an inexhaustible supply of ammunition.

The old friends of the late Count Lavergne, who knew some of the real facts of Gerard's birth—although they knew nothing of his mother, whose face none of them had ever seen, any more than they had heard her name—soon dropped quietly into the habit of holding their tongues on the subject. Young Gerard and his millions had been adopted; he like they had been received in the best circles of the strictest portion of society; conditionally, it is true. As a matter of fact, if the young and brilliant Count Lavergne had proposed to marry, and to bring pearl necklaces, automobiles, the publication of her name in the social columns of the newspapers, etc., to some well-brought-up maiden—that is to say, to one who had princely genealogies at her fingers' ends and who could not help thinking in English, you would then have heard how the parents of other equally well-born maidens, not less learned in aristocratic family lore and also thinking as involuntarily in English—you would certainly have heard how these relatives who had suddenly become rivals would have through jealousy dragged the bastard and the foundling in the mud! They would have loudly asked each other, in such a case, if this Gerard had really had his father's cook for a mother; or whether she had been the tenant of some shady cabaret, who had found a way to blackmail the late Count (known to have been at one time guilty of very strange practices), or perhaps the woman X. or Y., today serving a sentence in jail; even if she had been nobody still worse.

Having a hazy idea of the peril that might lie before him, however, Gerard prudently avoided all temptation to marry. He found it very pleasant to lead a careless and joyous life among women who from day to day became less heartless, since from week to week and month to month his reputation as a ravisher of souls increased and this publicity reached all the world.

He went everywhere—in town and in the country, in the clubs and in the chateaux; gay, insolent, at the same time familiar and filled with a careless arrogance; loud and very high of voice, speaking the sacred language—English, of course—with an impeccable accent, calling all the dukes by their Christian names, invited everywhere, adoring

everything which it is proper to admire, disgusted by everything which it is wrong to appreciate, in short, perfectly satisfied with the charming, with the correct sunshine of social favour.

And now here was some unknown abbé, telling him about some mysterious mother, who was dying! . . . But what mother? Was this to be another blow? Could all this really be something more serious than the most uncalled for of bad jokes?

It is easy to understand why Gerard had slept very little. He awaited with agony the communication which the telegram announced he was to receive. Before seven in the morning he had already taken his bath, and was shaved, polished, brushed, corseted, ready for anything.

He had already informed the hotel people that it was very important that every care should be taken not to allow him to be cut off while speaking, and to ensure that there should be no other telephonic difficulties. Meanwhile, he smoked several cigarettes, tried to read the previous night's newspapers, a guide that was lying on the table, a time-table. He even tried to write a letter: after reading, writing—every kind of folly! . . .

Five minutes past eight—nothing. Quarter past eight, twenty minutes past, still nothing. Towards half-past eight: "Hullo. . . . Lille calling . . ." How his heart began to beat!

A grave, calm and sad voice, speaking in very polished terms, came over the wire:

"Have I the honour of speaking to Count Gerard Lavergne? I am the Abbé Meunynck, of Lille. I telegraphed to you last night."

"Certainly, Monsieur l'Abbé." Gerard stammered.

"Monsieur, it is my painful duty to announce to you that Madame Acrambelle, your mother, is very ill. She is dying from cancer of the liver and her doctors state that it is scarcely possible for her to last another forty-eight hours. She has asked for you several times. She is still able more or less to recognise people."

"But, Monsieur l'Abbé, who is this Madame Acrambelle?"

"Your mother! . . . You do not know it, perhaps? There is a letter—several letters . . ."

"Well. . . . You will understand my surprise . . ."

"Undoubtedly . . . I realise it only too clearly!"

"You have spoken to me of a person whose name I have just heard for the first time in my life. My father always told me that my mother died when I was born. . . . Moreover, who are you, yourself? I do not know you any more than . . ."

"I quite understand your astonishment. I am the Abbé Meunynck, vicar of the church of St. Charles du Pont, the parish church of the Chateau of St. Genest. Madame Acrambelle honoured me with her entire confidence. Come to Lille, Monsieur . . ."

At this moment, as might have been expected, the inevitable interruption occurred: "Hullo, are you speaking?" asked the telephone girl, preparing to cut off the line.

Gerard shouted so furiously, however: "Hullo, hullo! I am speaking! Don't cut us off!" that the girl thought better of it, and allowed the conversation to continue.

"Come to Lille," continued the priest, "and as quickly as you can. Ask for me at the church. I shall be close by, for I live next door. I will give you the key to what, it is evident, is still a veritable mystery to you. I have in my possession several letters from your late father, which I shall be pleased to show you, and one document which is especially important. It will not take you long to get to Lille."

"Good heavens, of course it will not. . . . If you can swear to me . . ."

"Sir, both as a priest and as a man, I beg of you to grant the wish of your dying mother. Madame Acrambelle's daughter, your half-sister, has been informed, moreover, and it is partly in her name that I am telephoning to you . . ."

"Her daughter? . . . Is—is there anything else you have to tell me?"

"What do you mean?"

"Well, are there any other children?"

"No—Mademoiselle Marthe Acrambelle is the only girl."

"Well—and Monsieur Acrambelle?"

"Your mother has been a widow for a long time. . . . I hope, Monsieur, that you will come as soon as possible to your mother's bedside, before it is too late . . .?"

Gerard's brain appeared to him to have gone absolutely flat—like a gauze bag, so to speak, on which balls of lead had fallen.

Astounded, bewildered, losing his hold on the rudder and on everything else, he replied in a resigned and docile voice:

"Very well. I shall be at Lille tomorrow morning. I will come to the church of St. Charles du Pont, and I will ask for Abbé Meunynck . . ."

"I shall have the honour to be waiting for you, Monsieur."

And two hours afterwards Gerard's automobile left for Lille at top speed. Rain which gave Normandy the appearance of an ocean of frozen grass, was already beginning to fall. He already felt himself swallowed up in the mud of the North. Was it always raining like this at Amiens—at Cambrai—at Lille?

"How dismal Lille is!" thought Gerard, who had never been there.

IV

When Gerard touched, felt and held in his hands the document which he was about to read, he believed himself to be really lost.

It was a letter which had been written in the year 1893 by his father to a certain Léonie Lurot.

"I quite realise," said this letter, "the annoyances which you write to me about and which are afflicting you in your town of Langres. On the other hand I am quite prepared to admit that the child which you tell me you are expecting may possibly be mine, although there is no proof of this. I was not your only lover, my poor girl, as you know very well, and as I know also. There was more than one cavalry officer stationed at Langres, unfortunately.

"Nevertheless, I blame myself for leaving you in trouble in such circumstances. It is with me a question of conscience, as much as of religion. I do not want a child for which I,

among several other possible fathers, may be regarded as responsible, to receive an education which I should not approve.

"What I propose, in short, is this: that you shall go to Paris at my expense for your confinement, and I will take charge of the baby from its birth. I am a bachelor and free; it will therefore be brought up as my own son. I will go so far, perhaps, as to adopt him legally, if I find myself satisfied with him.

"On your part, however, you will undertake never to see him again, in any circumstances or anywhere. I intend to be the absolute master of his future and of his relations. Is that understood? If so, write to me fully.

"Think the whole matter well over. There are great advantages for yourself in such an arrangement. You will live for several months at my expense, you will never have any more worry about the child, and your mother, in her almshouse, will know nothing of the whole affair. Further, you will be at liberty to continue to live as you please."

Léonie Lurot, the Abbé Meunynck confided to Gerard, after having endured the mortification of "public reprobation" at Langres, had subsequently led a shameful and even deplorable existence on the streets of Paris until one day she met M. Félix Acrambelle, a wealthy commission agent from Nantes, who took charge of her, fell in love with her and eventually married her. This simple and kindly man, who spent nearly all his time in travelling about the country on his business, wept when Léonie Acrambelle, his beloved and respected wife, told him the story of her unhappy life. Her troubles, nevertheless, were of many kinds, and concerned notably the hardships of her earlier years and the difficulties which she had experienced in connection with her formerly sorely tempted and persecuted virtue. She never referred, however, to Langres, or its garrison, or to Count Lavergne and the dangerous episode of the clandestine confinement and the little boy that had been brought up far away from her. It was necessary that there should be no scandal concerning Madame Acrambelle's past, and there never was. It was necessary that she should be almost a saint, and she was.

And when Monsieur Acrambelle died in 1906, Madame Acrambelle became a veritable saint. She was then thirty-six, the mother of a little girl, the possessor of a large fortune. She showered money on the poor and on the church, and she attended Holy Communion every week. It would have been deplorable that a child born in the days gone by should have come to disturb her excellent middle-class respectability!

In many very discreetly veiled phrases, Abbé Meunynck unfolded the whole of this somewhat annoying story to Gerard, who listened without saying a word, with wide open eyes and his hands resting on his knees. The young Count Lavergne was far from insolent on this occasion!

"Understand me well," continued Abbé Meunynck, "I was not only Madame Acrambelle's confessor but her friend. She gave me her entire confidence. I had the duty of administering—the word is not too strong—her charities. She asked my humble advice in drawing her will. She made me give her my formal promise, as soon, alas, as she felt herself doomed, that I would warn you of her approaching end. She wished me to do this in order that her two children might be with her at the last. . . . Now, I have told you, Monsieur, all that is to be told concerning the at one time chequered career of the woman who was your mother, and I can assure you very sincerely that the piety and the goodness of such a life more than atoned—much more than atoned for the pitiful vicissitudes of her earlier life . . ."

Gerard received these revelations, blow after blow, as one receives successive and rapidly repeated squalls of rain. The gloom of the presbytery, the grave voice of the priest, this picture of a woman at the same time as much strumpet as virtuous, adventuress not less than perfect wife, "this saint," as the Abbé described her—here was enough to wrack and perplex the bright and chattering, frivolous and cowardly soul of a man of pleasure. Such people, in reality, are astonished at everything. One regards them as bold men about town, accustomed to contemplate without turning a hair the worst reverses of fortune or manifestations of human passion. A roué, it is generally thought, is a man who has seen every phase of life! . . .

In reality, the facts are quite different. The world in which such people move has its own rules, even for the most dissipated, and those who observe these rules live as tranquilly as in a boarding school or in a regimental mess. At such and such a time one does this, at such and such a time something else. This, for such and such things, is the only authorised method. This is amusing, that is allowed. This is boring, that is forbidden. One must enjoy oneself, one must laugh, one must regard sarcastically everything that may interfere with the regular trend of life. One must do this, one must not do that. . . . With this well understood, turn these species of soldiers or schoolboys loose into the universe, and they are filled with amazement!

Gerard now felt himself without either support or guidance. No lord or duke, in such a situation, would do this or that; there was no precedent, not the slightest tradition to enlighten him as to what ought to be done in his predicament. He was all at sea and drowning, and nothing but an instinctive feeling that it would not be the proper thing to do prevented him from confessing it.

For the rest, words failed him. No properly behaved man could ever allow himself to display or comment on any trouble which he felt. Such things were not done. He merely said: "It is all very annoying!" And by a movement of his eyebrows he added, without making use of any further words: "The whole situation is very delicate. Please understand that I do not wish to discuss the matter, and admire my discretion."

The Abbé continued:

"Of course, if Madame Acrambelle had revealed the secret of your birth to me during confession, I should not have been able to speak of it to anybody, not even to yourself. But it was to her adviser and not to her confessor that she made her avowal. . . . For the rest, she saw no reason to expect that what she told me would lead to any family difficulties or any other kind of trouble, any more than I did myself. So far as the inheritance of her property is concerned, everything will of course go to her legitimate daughter, Marthe Acrambelle, who is her universal legatee . . . apart from a few legacies, important, certainly, but of a

pious character and worthy of profound gratitude, which the deceased lady has bequeathed to our beloved parish and to certain hospitals. . . . Your mother wished that you should see her only on her deathbed, and she made me swear a long time ago to send for you when that mournful moment should arrive. . . . My only regret, alas, is that I did not summon you until it was too late!"

Abbé Meunynck crossed himself and stopped speaking. It became necessary for Gerard to say something, at the risk otherwise of appearing unnatural. Moreover, he felt rather moved. . . . His own mother? . . . He had never seen her . . . but he had often thought of her during some of his dreary hours of study at St. George's School . . . and at the time when he was being prepared for confirmation . . . and more than once, also, during the war. . . . And then he felt suddenly that he had endured as much as he could stand, poor boy: all these shocks of the past two days! Positively, he wanted to cry. . . . In any case, why should he not? In good society, such as that to which he belonged himself, one was looked down upon if he behaved like a counterjumper or a newspaper fellow; but one was allowed to permit one's eyes to fill with tears occasionally, in connection with certain events, either in the history of England or in one's family. In the latter case especially one could, to a certain extent, allow a few tears to fall, when one could no longer keep them back. And the young Count Lavergne, overcome at last, was grieved!

"At what time," he asked, in a very changed voice, "did Madame Acram—did my mother die?"

"At eleven o'clock last night. And may God receive her soul."

"Ah! And who watched the body through the night?"

"All three of us, turn by turn—Mademoiselle Marthe Acrambelle, Sister Saint-Philippe, who had nursed her, and myself. . . . Mademoiselle Marthe, whose grief was painful to witness, has been admirable, poor girl. In spite of her superhuman fatigue and the devoted attention, so painful for her, which she lavished on her mother from the beginning of her illness, as during her last agony, she barely consented to rest for an hour or two during the night, and

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long before daylight she insisted on again being carried into the room where her mother died."

"Carried? Why carried? Is she also ill?"

"Ah, I see—you do not know! Poor Marthe Acrambelle has been paralysed almost from birth. She has to get about in an invalid chair."

Paralysed? An invalid chair? . . . Gerard now lost his footing entirely; this last blow finished him! What could he possibly say to this helpless girl, who was also his half-sister, in the presence of their dead mother? . . .

Since his earliest childhood he had seen about him only well-clad chamber maids, nurses who were or who wished to appear to be in perfect health, and afterwards persons who were powdered and painted, perfumed, compulsorily gay, if not even frisky, or perhaps cross and complaining, if they wished to be, but poutingly cross or dissatisfied with the dissatisfaction displayed by the daintily attired cocotte. He scarcely knew what genuine sadness was. He was aware that beings afflicted with incurable maladies or, worse still, with disabling infirmities, actually existed. At the same time the only persons of this kind of whom he had ever thought were men who had been rendered helpless in the war, whom he respected without pitying very much, no doubt because he had run the same risks himself, as a matter of fact, and if he had himself won at this terrible game, *mon Dieu,* it had been purely a question of luck. They, the heroes, had lost, but he always felt that to some extent he was their comrade, and he always imagined that they were young, like himself. In reality, he had not thought very much or very deeply about them at all. Gerard had his club, his pretty friends, his polo, his racing; one could not think of everything.

For these reasons this permanently disabled girl, his sister, frightened him. He began to feel himself timid before a woman. . . . This inexpressible and entirely new kind of embarrassment added still more to his emotion—to his uneasiness, as he expressed it.

A brief silence having fallen between them, Abbé Meunynck felt it to be his duty to offer to take Gerard to the Chateau of St. Genest. The body was to be placed in its

coffin that evening, and the funeral had been fixed for the next day or the day after.

"You will be able, therefore, still to look upon for some hours the features of Madame Acrambelle. The serenity of death has fallen upon her and pain has emaciated her during the past few days, but her features have scarcely changed."

Gerard rose, docile and mild.

"Let us go," he said.

The Abbé having also stood up, the overwhelmed young man, in spite of himself, felt like a very small boy by the side of this grave priest, who seemed to be judging him, under the crucifix which dominated the room. He hastened to add, with as much modesty as sincerity:

"I should also like to watch by the body."

It was very cold, that expression "the body." . . . But coming from the young Count Lavergne, who had just arrived direct from Deauville, there was in it almost a cry from the heart.

On leaving the presbytery, Gerard asked Abbé Meunynck where he could buy some black gloves, as his own did not appear to be suitable. Their stout buckskin, of the colour of autumn leaves, and their enormous fingers looked to be more suited to gripping the hunting whip or the steering wheel of an automobile than to touch, with deference and dread, such mournful things as he was now concerned with. And moreover, such gloves were too striking, just a little too striking for Lille.

They were like that cursed perfume—mixture No. 31, which he got from Chanel's—which always floated round Gerard. . . .

Ah, what a nuisance! How he dreaded what was coming! How his heart was beating!

V

The young man whom the Abbé Meunynck accompanied to the room in which the dead woman lay, therefore, was a very reserved, silent, suitably black-gloved young man, who was, secretly, plunged in the keenest anxiety.

Mademoiselle Marthe Acrambelle was no longer there when he arrived, having doubtless not wished, from a delicate scruple, that this son should first see the remains of his mother in the presence of a third person, no matter who that person might be. The only person in the room was Sister St. Philippe, who was kneeling near the body; she rose when the priest and his companion appeared, bowed to them, and left the room. The Abbé, in his turn, knelt down.

Gerard felt that he ought to do the same—but not in order to pray, for he could not even remember the words of the Lord's Prayer. He was unable, however, to take his eyes from the dead woman's face. This, then, was his mother, his own mother? . . .

A white napkin, tied round her head and under the chin, like the wimple of a nun, kept the dead mouth closed. Deep wrinkles gave the icy features an aspect of rather haughty yet very sweet severity, as is often the case after death. In the outline of the nose and the arch of the eyebrows there was a distinct resemblance to Gerard, but it was necessary to look very closely in order to discover, in the end, any relation between the lines of this mask, transfigured by the terrible majesty of death, and the features of the scented dandy, even though Gerard was at this moment a thousand miles from laughter and even overcome.

The Abbé crossed himself.

"I will leave you, Monsieur," he said in a low voice; "I have to go to the church. I will come back in a couple of hours. In any case you know where to find me, in case of need."

And Gerard remained there alone, before the candles, the holy water and the body of his mother.

"My mother!" he said to himself in a stupor, "my mother!" He spoke with emotion also—emotion, or a recollection of his childhood, he did not realise which, for he no longer recognised his own feelings.

It was not the first time that he had evoked this phantom, which had hitherto been without form and without features, but delicious: "A mother . . . my mother . . ."

In spite of all his fatuousness, Gerard often pitied him-

self, when he found himself in his own home, with neither club companion nor wife nor anyone before whom to play the blasé, the insolent, the scornful. He had formerly been a very spoiled little boy, who was much too rich but who was nevertheless not at all antipathetic. He had adored books and pictures; now in books and pictures mothers are always represented as infinitely tender. And heaven only knows in what terms his masters at St. George's School had spoken of the mothers of their pupils, who had given birth to them and had watched over their earliest temptations!

The first violent temptation which Gerard had experienced—he was then fourteen years old—had been called Lucrezia, who was a "small part lady" appearing at the Cabourg Casino. This rather faded young woman received him in her dressing-gown in the tiny villa in which she lodged. Sometimes she allowed him to take certain not very naughty liberties, which caused him to swell with pride. One day, however, after she had received a visit from a certain Argentinian gentleman with blue hair, she had bidden him a sudden farewell. "Clear out, little boy," Lucrezia had said, pointing with her red-painted finger-nail towards the door; "clear out at once, and never come back! José doesn't want to see you again!"

Never before had our seaside cherubim suffered so much from humiliation, from love and from solitude as on that afternoon of August 17, of which he so well remembered the date. He wandered weeping about the sands until the evening, and a hundred times, in his broken and boyish voice the poor boy had murmured, amid his heart-breaking sobs, "Mamma! mamma!"

Monsieur the Count Lavergne, his father, was at the Deauville races on this distressful day. On sitting down to dinner that evening this excellent man, who was himself labouring under plenty of troubles of his own, remarked to his son: "You are looking rather pale, my boy? I am afraid the seaside does not altogether suit you. Why don't you go to Switzerland next year, with your tutor, Abbé Pigeon? You would both be able to do some climbing, and I am sure you would not find it wearisome there."

During the four terrible years of the war, also, Gerard

had often appealed to his mother for help—or he would have been the only soldier who entered the great conflict if he had not done so. At certain periods it had been sufficient for Sub-Lieutenant Lavergne to have lost all ideas of everything, owing to the horrors or the cold or the misery or the boredom with which he was surrounded, to cause him to give vent to the cry of "Mother!" the eternal and instinctive cry of all humanity. . . He was an orphan, but when the soul is bruised this cry of "Mother!" rises like a call for help.

And on that other frightful night—well before the war, this time—when Gerard, who had not even then taken his degree, had lost four thousand francs at poker, which he had borrowed the same morning from a money-lender; and at what a terrible rate of interest, for a minor! Before he could summon up courage to confess what had happened to his father, how keenly the poor youngster had felt the absence of a woman in the house! On such occasions one has a terrible need for two arms around one, and of a shoulder against which one can sob out, "Oh, if you only knew, mamma!"

And Mademoiselle Irene Stephanopoli, with her jade green eyes and her body like the stalk of a flower. . . . His father had told him: "I forbid you to see such people!" Who knows what a trembling mother would have replied to the confidences of a love-stricken boy? "My boy," the voice of which Gerard dreamed would have softly murmured, "wait a little while. Later on, if you still love her, we will see . . ."

Three months afterwards, as he could now realise, he would have found himself in a June garden, where the syringas had showered their snowy petals. . . .

But how many times would not have the young Count Lavergne, tired of his rather heavy rôle of seducer and of Parisian star—ah, how many times would he not have sacrificed how many golden or brown curls, or the most rare of chestnut locks for a dear grey head! He had never been sweetly grumbled at at breakfast time: "You came to bed very late last night again! Really, you will make me ill, my dear child!"

Now it lay there, that grey head, under his eyes. . . . At the same time, one scarcely saw the hair; it did not seem to be as white as that of a dowager. What age could Madame Acrambelle have been? Fifty, fifty-five? Twenty-five years older than her son Gerard, apparently.

Sister St. Philippe came back into the room without making more noise than a shadow when she entered.

"Monsieur," she murmured with a kind of great respect, "the ladies from the Christian Coöperative Society have brought some flowers. They want to see their benefactrice for the last time."

"Very well; let them come in!" Gerard replied, rather sharply.

He was annoyed that he should be treated as if he were one of the family. Everybody knew about it then, even this nun?

He already saw himself following the coffin as chief mourner, by a kind of tacit agreement on the part of everybody else present; the whole of Lille would notice him, and he would be pointed out and remarked upon with curiosity and pitying looks, or malevolent. The local newspapers would find out his name, and certainly print it and from the Lille newspapers to those in Paris was a very short journey, he realised. It is almost inconceivable to what an extent people in even the most disdainful circles of society look upon the appearance in the newspapers of their names and comments on their most ordinary acts as entirely a matter of course. And afterwards they complain, with an air of perfect boredom: "It is abominable! One can't do the slightest thing without it being mentioned by the newspapers. Can't they really find something else to talk about?" Gerard foresaw that endless paragraphs concerning his presence at this funeral would appear in the *Figaro,* the *Gaulois,* the *Echo de Paris,* the *Vie Parisienne,* the *Journal,* etc., and perhaps also in the *Oeuvre,* the *Merle Blanc.* . . . His scarcely born filial emotion was already skilfully tempted by the devil.

The ladies from the Christian Coöperative Society duly appeared. There were five of them, and they entered the room in single file. Three of them were very old, and the

others of no precise age; but they were all dressed almost alike in black, and their garments indicated that they had been anxious to waste as little material as possible, for reasons of economy. They laid down their wreaths with the same gesture, murmured the same brief prayer, and simultaneously then glanced at Gerard with the same grief-stricken air, and remarked in a low voice, addressing themselves partly to the dead woman, partly to Sister St. Philippe and especially to Gerard:

"What an enormous loss!"

"Both for her friends and for all the poor!"

"She was really too charitable!"

"Nobody will ever be able to take her place!"

"She has taken away so much happiness with her!"

Considering the fashionable education he had received, Gerard really talked very well, as a rule, and was sometimes almost eloquent at table and on the polo ground; but he had not been accustomed to have to say anything on mournful occasions like this one and these five ladies of unquestionable respectability, moreover, simply caused him to lose his head — he, Gerard, whom neither princess nor queen of Paris had ever been able to silence, he who was able to chatter louder than anybody else and to say less than anybody else in no matter what salon of the *faubourg* or of the sixteenth arrondissement.

It must be confessed that these ladies of the Christian Coöperative Society appeared to be less out of their place than he in this enormous death chamber, hung throughout with the most horrible red and yellow silk, of which the red was so dull and the yellow so faded that the appearance there of anyone whose clothes were at all smart or well cut gave an impression of defiance, of censure and of example.

And not only did the dead woman's bedroom appear to be at the same time pretentious and ridiculous, or, more precisely speaking, to be in the style that was considered "the very best" in the most remote departments of France in the year 1895, but the whole Chateau of St. Genest was on the same lines.

The Chateau? A chateau on the road from Lille to

Roubaix, that perfectly flat country, that lake of macadam and scanty grass, encumbered with dull-looking houses in brick and sooty stone, one of the most depressing districts in the world? When one hears the word chateau one calls up lawns and shrubberies and dreaming waters, whereas St. Genest was merely a big house, with iron railings that ran along the roadside. A broad stretch of gravel, framed by a few small poplars, which had been planted and kept alive with some difficulty in that region, lay between passers-by and the curious building, to which an enormous portico had been added like a false nose to a face—a monumental caricature.

Gerard knew nothing of architecture, which is a difficult art, in which intelligence counts for as much as taste, but he had been accustomed to visit a large number of noble and charming old mansions, of venerable chateaux and of beautiful and harmoniously constructed houses; so that the absurd and abortive building in which he now found himself instinctively shocked him, just as a ready-made suit would have offended his eyes among an assembly of dandies. "My mother!" he thought, "evidently her husband was not very distinguished!"

His feelings may be imagined, therefore, when Sister St. Philippe returned to the room, not less silently than she had left it, and whispered in the ear of the ladies: "Mademoiselle Acrambelle would like to see you," and then added, addressing Gerard: "Monsieur, if you will also be good enough to come . . . I will take your place here for a few moments, if you wish."

It was almost an order. Gerard obeyed with a clutch at his throat and trembling hands. As a matter of fact he had scarcely the option of refusing. He followed the five ladies from the Christian Coöperative Society as though he had been a wreck that was floating behind them.

Crossing the threshold of a room whose entrance was darkened by drawn curtains, the ladies advanced with slow steps, although without the slightest hesitation, towards a point which Gerard was at first barely able to distinguish in the semi-darkness. The little troop squared itself round its objective, like a squad of soldiers at drill, after which

they leaned forward individually each preceding the next, towards a tiny and plaintive figure that was imprisoned like Scarron in a wheeled chair. They kissed this unfortunate and pitiful little person, pronounced quickly the conventional phrases at the rate of one per ten seconds and per person, and then retired in good order, leaving Gerard and the poor girl, in a terrible silence, face to face: Gerard very pale and completely upset, and the poor Marthe Acrambelle, still more shaken and anxious, suffocated with emotion, breathless and with heaving breast!

"Mademoiselle . . ." he said.

Good heavens, what should he say next? All that he could see of his half-sister was a tiny heap of clothes, a kind of frail skeleton, curled up in a ball, like a sick bird. Doubly afflicted, Marthe Acrambelle was a hunchback. . . .

Two glowing torches illuminated this wretchedness, however, two pupils of molten jet, the distracted eyes of a breathless pigeon, held captive in the hand. The soul of Marthe Acrambelle was an ebullient flame, a lava stream of faith and goodness, that would have inspired a crusade or brought Lucifer to the feet of a village parson!

It is possible that Count Gerard Lavergne in person would have trembled with piety before this nakedly open soul, which spoke already, before a single word had been uttered by the helpless girl in her invalid chair.

VI

Marthe Acrambelle, on her part, did not leave Gerard long in uncertainty. She showed herself more prompt to speak, this feeble country girl, than did he, the fluent conversationalist of the salons and in the midst of the pearl necklaces. It was not, however, that she was not almost dying from apprehension and timidity; but she was more at home in the mournful circumstances, which had scarcely taken her by surprise, her invalid's life having consisted only of disaster and resignation since her birth. Further, she carried within her the secret, the untirable energy of a pious girl, whom the phrase "It is my duty!" was sufficient to carry to the stake.

She leaned towards him, looked at him with her soft and burning eyes, as if she wished, without desiring to do him harm, to pierce his very soul; and she said to him, in a voice that broke at each instant—not because she hesitated in regard to what she wished to say, but solely through the emotion that strangled her:

"Monsieur—Monsieur Gerard Lavergne . . . I know. . . . I am aware. . . . Our dear Abbé Meunynck has told me. . . . Yes, I know of the bonds that linked you to my mother . . ."

She turned away her head.

"To our mother. . . . I thank you for having come."

"It was the least that I could do!"

Thus spoke therefore this dandy: "It was the least that I could do . . ." A little lady has received from some of her guests a few flowers before the dinner she is giving. "Ah, you are really spoiling me!" she simpers. "Oh, my dear lady, it is the least that I could do!" replies the well brought up guest. There are certain formulæ that rise to the lips without being thought of.

"A day, two days sooner," continued Marthe Acrambelle, "you would have found her still alive."

The thin face of the paralysed girl, covered with wrinkles, in spite of her youth, could not conceal the regret that she felt—and perhaps also a reproach, which was nevertheless immediately repressed.

"In any case, it is doubtful whether mamma would have recognised you. She retained her consciousness almost to the last moment. . . . But it was a long while since she had last seen you—before the war, I believe?"

"I beg your pardon, Mademoiselle? When she last saw me?"

"Certainly. Does that appear to surprise you? Don't you remember? . . . There is a portrait of you in our album—I will show it to you. It must have been taken eight or ten years ago—perhaps twelve. You appeared to be quite young at the time. It was at Monte Carlo, I believe."

"I have been to Monte Carlo several times."

"That photograph excited my curiosity a good deal. I always said to mamma: 'Why do you keep this gentle-

man's photograph among our family portraits?' and she always replied: 'It is the photograph of the son of one of my greatest friends in days gone by.' I am afraid I embarrassed her a good deal with my eternal stupid question. At that moment, as you will understand, I was ignorant of the facts of the matter. It was only a week ago that I heard them from the Abbé."

Again that secret and annoying thought came into Gerard's mind: what did this story of the photograph really mean? There was a portrait of him in Lille, then, in a family photograph album, among those of a lot of unknown people. What was to prevent it from getting into the hands of some journalist, who would reproduce it? . . . In spite of himself, he returned to the question:

"Excuse me, but this photograph of myself . . . at Monte Carlo . . ."

"Your photograph? . . . Oh, it was taken, I believe, on the Casino terrace. . . . There is a terrace there, isn't there? I have never gone there, you know."

"What was the origin of this picture? Is it an amateur photograph?"

"Oh, yes, I believe so!"

The piercing eyes of the lame girl hid themselves under their sensitive lids, which reminded Gerard of the semi-transparent eyelids of certain birds. She was shocked at the sudden interest which her half-brother displayed in this paltry detail, in this old portrait, and its origin, and the place in which it had been taken. . . . What, while his mother lay dead in the next room, he was able to trouble himself with a mere photograph?

Marthe Acrambelle, however, had removed her eyes from his face as much from astonishment as from delicacy. She did not wish to appear to disapprove of Gerard's questions. She had a kind of obscure desire to be able to love him like a brother. She also had a haunting desire that he should prove worthy of this pure and affectionate sentiment.

After a very brief pause Marthe very courageously resumed the conversation, and sufficiently quickly that Gerard noticed nothing:

"The funeral, don't you think, should take place tomor-

row, and the body should be placed in the coffin late this afternoon?"

She consulted him with a glance. By this she meant to give him to understand, with a consideration and a kindness that were remarkable, that he was regarded as one of the family. By "Don't you think" she appeared to say: "That will be convenient to you, my brother, will it not?"

Gerard felt this to be her meaning, at least to a slight extent. With a very graceful movement, he took Marthe's bony hand in his, and this was more than enough to cause the poor girl to burst into sobs. Gerard softly pressed her long and fragile fingers and for the moment he forgot Paris, Deauville and the rest. "My mother . . ." he said to himself again. . . . He was an orphan, in brief.

Her fit of weeping over, Marthe Acrambelle almost apologised.

"I loved her so much, you know! She was so sweet, so trustful, and she spoiled me so much! I have never been very happy in my life, but that has not really been her fault. She surrounded me with unheard-of attentions, my poor dear mother! . . . Oh, she was born to be a mother! . . . If only you could have known how tremendously affectionate she was! . . . I understand a good many things now. Very often she petted me. 'My darling,' she would say, 'my only little darling, I have only you.' . . . 'Only you!' I always thought she meant my father when she used that expression; now I know she was thinking of you. . . . I remember perfectly something which I heard her murmur one day. . . . I must tell you that I have often had periods of very severe suffering, and that I am frequently wracked and tortured with pains in my back and my head, when my poor little body is perfect misery to me. When I used to suffer from such attacks mother never left me night or day. She rocked me to sleep like a baby and was both trained nurse and mother to me. . . . On one of these occasions, after a day of veritable martyrdom, I remember hearing her mutter below her breath: 'Oh, my God, why has the one been so stricken, while the other is without a blemish? . . . At the moment I did not realise very keenly

what she said—possibly because I was so ill at the time. When I recall that expression today, however . . . it was evidently you of whom she thought—you, the other, the one without a blemish."

There was no bitterness, no envy in her tone. This time Marthe looked her brother full in the face, with all the purity of the flame in her glowing eyes. She was ingenuous and passionate, like the saints.

"If I had supposed," Gerard now repeated, "if I had ever thought . . ."

He did not finish, either in words or in thought: what would he have done "if he had ever thought"? At that moment he had not the least idea.

"The funeral," Marthe Acrambelle resumed, "will take place, then, tomorrow afternoon. The notices of the time have already been sent out. I have an old cousin at Lille who is looking after all that; and besides, I have the Abbé and Sister St. Philippe. . . . You are staying at an hotel, I suppose? I am sorry I cannot offer you a room here, as the house is upside down, as you may imagine, but I hope you will regard yourself as quite at home here. . . . It is your mother's house, you know. . . . I am sorry . . ."

She pulled herself up. Gerard's eyes, however, questioned her with real solicitude.

"Yes," she continued, "I am sorry I did not know you before. Alas, as I now realise entirely, there was every reason why I did not: it was impossible. . . . But perhaps now that . . . or a little later. . . . At my age, as you will understand, I do not trouble very much as to what people may say!"

The question of age worried Gerard almost as much as it does a good many pretty women.

"But you are very much younger than I am!" he replied earnestly. "I was born in ninety-four."

Marthe shook her head.

"Look at me . . ." she said.

The young man pitied her, and remarked timidly:

"Consider me as your real brother!"

He had probably never said as much to anybody in his life before. To promise his life and soul to the most

fascinating and witty creature, whom he had never seen before and whose husband was trembling with jealousy within two feet of him, was child's play for Gerard; whereas to console a humble and plain-featured invalid in a house in the depths of the country, in circumstances that were more than perilous, and might prove to involve him in ridicule was for a society figure like himself a veritable exploit! To accomplish such a feat, it was necessary that he should be absolutely carried away with magnanimity, with exaltation!

The words "real brother" once more filled poor Marthe's eyes with tears.

"Oh, thank you, thank you! . . . Your kindness has done me an enormous amount of good. . . . Thank you! . . . I shall miss so much affection now that mother is dead . . ."

Then, as if she had reflected, she added:

"Be my brother first—the friend will come afterwards, I hope!"

Gerard asked at what time the body would be placed in the coffin. He wished to be present.

"I should like to sit up with her tonight," he said.

"Oh, but you will be so tired—you have been travelling since last night! There are plenty of us, without troubling you—the Sister, the Abbé, my cousin."

"I must absolutely insist!"

"Very well—come, then. . . . These terrible hours have overcome me. I feel dead with fatigue and grief. Tomorrow, however . . . yes, tomorrow, shall we have a little chat . . . as brother and sister? I will tell you about her goodness and her charity, of the way in which she knew how to give from her heart. My darling mother! . . . You must certainly learn to know her also . . . your mother."

They parted from each other with much emotion . . . especially she, whose feeble strength was exhausted.

VII

Gerard returned towards half-past eleven the same evening to his mother's death chamber, which had in the interval been transformed into a mortuary chapel. The var-

nished coffin was hidden among a mass of flowers, of which the largest had been taken away. Candles on a little table cast a soft light on the holy water font, the handful of green box and the crucifix. It was barely possible to distinguish the red and yellow hangings on the walls, while the perfume of the summer night came in through the bars of the wooden shutters.

From time to time an automobile snored along the road below, and rapidly passed out of hearing. Then quiet descended once more, mingled with a vague and silky rustling; this came from the stunted shivering outside in the midnight August air, like trees stirred by a high wind on the edge of a broad meadow. . . .

The room was certainly silent, even religiously quiet, if you like, but not really solitary, for Nature had insinuated a finger therein.

Mademoiselle Marthe Acrambelle, Sister St. Philippe told him, had gone to bed; they had at last induced her to sleep, or at least to try and find a little sleep. The old cousin from Lille would be ready to watch in his turn with Gerard, whenever he desired her presence.

"I beg of you, my sister," he said, "to leave me here all night!"

"You have only to knock, Monsieur," she replied. "Miss Felicia will be resting quite ready in an armchair behind this door, so that you will in no way disturb her by knocking for her."

Gerard remained alone. He gazed for a long time at the coffin, and listened to the memories, the regrets, the silences, the night. . . . Then he seated himself by the side of a table on which glowed a subdued electric lamp surrounded by a blue veil, which was sufficiently transparent, however, not to render the light invisible. Near the lamp was a photograph album . . . the famous album, no doubt? . . . Was this its accustomed place? Or had Marthe Acrambelle herself placed it on this table and under this night-light, in order that Gerard might turn over its pages during his hours of watching? In any case, it would be only natural for him to open it. . . .

Moreover, Gerard could scarcely have resisted looking

over the album, even had he wished to. Merely to see an old picture of himself would be distinctly interesting. He now recalled very clearly the photograph to which Marthe had referred.

The portrait was very much like him and very sharp and clear. It had been taken during the winter of 1912 by his comrade Hervé Lemouel, on the terrace at Monte Carlo. Gerard had gone to spend a fortnight at the Lemouels' villa on the shore of the Mediterranean. He was then nineteen. He was already out of mourning for his father and already the precocious heir of the Lavergnes was carrying on a stubborn fight against the venerable M. de Manégat, his uncle and guardian, in regard to his sumptuary expenditure. Gerard himself struck heavy blows with bills and by running up debts; his guardian replied by perpetually threatening that he would call together a family gathering and place Gerard under trustees; the struggle as a rule ending with substantial sums falling into the young man's pockets, where they did not remain very long.

In short, young cub that he still was, Gerard Lavergne already found himself being saluted by *maîtres d'hôtel* with great respect. The ladies were in no way ignorant of this detail. Further, he was charming, this boy, charming to look at and amusing to hear—a ravishing figure and with an amount of presumption sufficient to conquer a thousand of them.

One afternoon young Hervé Lemouel, who walked about continually with a magnificent photographic camera, fitted with an unmatchable lens, suddenly called out to him: "Don't move!" Gerard was smiling at the moment, and he obediently obeyed the order given to him, without ceasing to display his graceful smile. The result of this veritable surprise had been a remarkable picture in which a very handsome young Count Lavergne was seen locked inside a tight-fitting overcoat, beautifully gloved, with his hat thrown slightly back from his forehead, a bright and intelligent look on his face and an aspect that was entirely insolent.

Hervé Lemouel, who was as vain as a peacock of his photographic prowess, had an enormous number of copies of

this photograph, which he regarded as his masterpiece, printed off, and distributed the proofs broadcast.

Gerard reconstituted perfectly, as he watched his mother's corpse, the history of this photograph, and he saw it again without the slightest objection, for it had always pleased him. . . . But how and why came it to be found in the hands of the dead woman? No Madame Acrambelle had ever been known at Monte Carlo, either to himself, so far as he could remember, or without doubt to Hervé, or to the little party of friends with whom they both played golf, went motoring, went walking with the girls or visited the bars along the coast.

Whatever attraction this old souvenir, flattering as it was to his fatuousness, could have for Gerard, however, it must be confessed that if his hand trembled a good deal in opening the album it was due above all to the thought that he might find therein a portrait of Madame Acrambelle, of the dead woman herself—of his mother. Down to the present he had only been able to contemplate the white face on the death bed, the marble features, softened by the napkin round the head. In those rooms in the Chateau of St. Genest to which he had had access, he had not observed the slightest photograph hung on any of the walls, or on any of the furniture. In the middle of one of the walls of the bedroom there hung only a large and gloomy painting representing a gentleman of somewhat silly appearance—the departed Acrambelle, no doubt. By the bedside there was a dainty miniature—that of poor Marthe as a little girl, and, be it understood, very much embellished. That was all: of portraits of the dead woman there was no trace. No doubt Marthe, however, had kept some. Gerard would ask her tomorrow. Meanwhile, the album—quick, the album. . . . He began to turn over the pages with a beating heart.

Ah, here it was! . . . Yes, here was the departed Acrambelle again, much younger, with a rather stylish-looking woman by his side. Gerard recognised her at once—it was no doubt his mother at the time of her marriage. Indisputably Gerard resembled this still slim and pretty woman: the same nose, the same eyebrows, probably the same kind

of smile. In the picture, unfortunately, she was smiling by order of the photographer, which spoilt everything.

Further on, there she was again! She had become stouter, she was not so good looking, and her toilette appeared to be more pretentious and more *fagotée*. Gerard felt a little surprised and troubled. . . .

Then little Marthe appeared—poor child, how pitiful she was! At six years old, she was still carried by a nurse. . . . After this pages after pages were filled with pictures of unknown people. . . .

Suddenly Gerard was startled and he placed the album well under the light: yes, it was certainly himself—on a page all to itself was his portrait of 1912, the only one taken by Hervé Lemouel, in fact, blooming in the midst of all these dull and dreary personages. The hat, the pose, the look. . . .

Eleven years fell away at a stroke and, as by a miracle, Monte Carlo, Cannes, a hundred adventures were reborn from the past which was both so near and so far away. . . . A date had been written under the photograph: January, 1912. And opposite, on the other page—good heaven, La Maréchale!

Yes, yes, it was certainly the woman whom those impudent young rascals, Hervé Lemouel and his gang, had nicknamed "the marshaless," because of her high-plumed hat, in the style that was worn that winter, which looked so comical above her corpulent figure. She had been photographed on the Riviera, and here Gerard suddenly saw her again, like an hallucination, with her solid well-fed matron's back and balloon-like chest, her pearls and, at the same time, her infinitely tender, not to say timid, air. . . .

And the whole pitiful story of the poor Maréchale suddenly came back to him; a distressing but very childish incident which he had totally forgotten down to the present moment. To speak truthfully, it was scarcely a subject to keep in pious memory! . . .

Now, La Maréchale was certainly and undoubtedly Madame Acrambelle. . . . But how had Gerard been able to discover any kind of connection between the slim and delightful young woman whose picture was to be seen at

the beginning of the album in the company of her husband, the deceased Acrambelle, and this big, homely, beplumed person at Monte Carlo? What had made him recall this foolish and rather laughable person, met by chance on the Cote d'Azur, while only this morning he had gazed with poignant emotion on the emaciated face and forever silent features of the dead—and of what dead!

La Maréchale, the unfortunate Maréchale! . . . his mother!

Gerard felt himself becoming pale. When your horse shies and puts a foot too near a precipice, you think little of it—until you turn in your saddle and realise into what depths you have just missed falling, and then you find yourself turning pale!

One evening during that January, 1912, as he was dining at the Grand Hotel at Monte Carlo, with his friends and a bevy of frivolous girls, one of the boys in smoking jackets —perhaps Hervé himself, leaned smilingly towards Gerard:

"Would you like me to present you with a very large lady?"

"No, thanks. I'm not hungry."

"But, old man, she's got lots of pearls!"

"Well, I've still a little money left."

"Oh, you have no heart to be touched!"

"Well, where is the lady?"

"Close by you—second table to the right of the door. But don't turn round at once. She isn't looking very comfortable. And don't smile, or you will finish her. She hasn't swallowed a mouthful for the last twenty minutes, because she has been looking at you all the time. She's in an ecstasy. Another of your victims!"

Nonchalantly, Gerard finished by turning in the direction indicated. There were two ladies, as a matter of fact, sitting opposite each other at a little table. The first was gifted with a comfortable *embonpoint* and, as Hervé had said, she wore a quite notable pearl necklace. Correspondingly thin, appreciably older and dressed without the slightest display, the other woman appeared rather to be some old and respectable lady's companion. The second lady, however, had her back partly turned to the table where the

young people were sitting, while the woman with the pearl necklace sat facing them and, without a movement, as if inert and struck with astonishment or of adoration, with her eyes fixed and her hands extended on the table, she contemplated Gerard—it was true, Gerard alone, and with all her soul, poor woman!

"I say, Hervé," observed the object of such fervour, "she has been rather a long time in the bottle, your *protégée!* Don't you find her rather ripe? Wouldn't something younger be better?"

"Just look in the mirror in front of you—you look about fifteen this evening! You might be her grandson—you are just the right age. I'll go and ask her . . ."

And Hervé made a pretence at rising from his seat. "What is it?" the girls asked immediately. The whole table became interested in the affair. There was some laughter, and a little excitement. A few heads turned towards the lady with the necklace who, noticing that people were looking at her, suddenly started and, with a word to her companion, got up and went out. Her honest features appeared to be troubled. The ruthless Hervé pretended to be anxious about her:

"And when they find her lying in the Casino gardens tomorrow morning with a revolver by her side, they will say that it is gambling again!"

All that night and on the following day, Gerard was teased without mercy. He was congratulated on his new conquest. The girls especially found endless subjects for comment in the delicate pink of the lady's complexion, which *eau oxygénée* had helped to distribute on the half-chestnut and no doubt half-grey hair of the matron.

"Exactly what is a matron?" asked Irene Darban, one of the girls in question.

"Oh, it means a good deal of work," was the reply. "Just wait and see Gerard's features in a fortnight. A quinquina, Gerard? With a dash of kola? . . . You must keep up your strength, you know."

Shortly before dinner Irene Darban burst into the bar:

"Quick!" she said, "the good lady of yesterday, the matron, is sitting on the terrace, with a general's cocked

hat on—no, a marshal's, for it's a big one! Come along—it's too good to miss! Quick! Quick!"

As a matter of fact Madame Acrambelle—"La Maréchale," as she was henceforth called—was dreaming, enveloped in furs, surmounted with her terrible hat.

"She is seeing you in her dreams, Gerard!" said Hervé.

He did not suspect, alas, how true his jest really was.

Gerard, however, began to be a little tired of this long-drawn-out joke.

"Come on, then," he said, "I'll ask her to come and lunch with us, as you are so interested in her. It's Friday, so I'll just ask her if she is fasting today, and I'll come back to you."

At a negligent pace, he strolled towards La Maréchale who, on seeing him approach, began to tremble violently. Gerard smiled, a little confused. He went up to her, hat in hand.

"Madame," he said, very gracefully, "I want to speak quite frankly to you, as that will be much better and you will not be a cause of so much scandal. What I wish to say is this: I have made a bet with my friends to invite you to lunch with us this morning. Permit me, however, to introduce myself: I am Count Gerard Lavergne. I confess it is not very correct of me . . ."

He stopped suddenly, in amazement. Two long tears poured down the cheeks of La Maréchale.

"My poor dear child!" she murmured; "my poor dear child!"

And, as on the evening before, she rose without another word and walked away, wiping her eyes as she went.

Gerard did not understand the situation at all, neither did his friends, and all the more so because they never saw La Maréchale again. Hervé Lemouel, nevertheless, whose temperament was rather that of the low comedian, and who also had a touch of the detective in his preferences, said to his friend the next day:

"Do you know that La Maréchale actually left yesterday? . . . I gave the hall porter at her hotel a little present for her, with instructions that it was to be given to her only at the moment when she was leaving."

"What was it? A pearl? You will ruin yourself."

"No, it was your photograph—my masterpiece."

"Oh, how stupid!"

"Never mind! It will be treasured as a souvenir down in the country where she lives."

"Does she come from very far off?"

"You had only to look at her hat to recognise that!"

"Did you find out her name?"

"Yes—Carouelle, Acourelle, Carambelle, or something of that sort. Why? Does she interest you? You are not feverish about her?"

"To such an extent that I am going to bed . . ."

Carouelle, Acourelle, Carambelle—poor name, forgotten five minutes after it fell from Hervé's lips, how it echoed again today in Gerard's soul—and the sound of it was as heavy and plaintive as a knell.

All this petty and foolish story had been suddenly brought back to Gerard in all its most unpleasant details. He now recalled without the slightest omissions the rather coarse jokes and cruel fun of which he and his companions, like so many schoolboys on their holidays, had been guilty. The album fell on his knees and his chin on his breast, and without effort he again lived through those moments whose horror and childish vulgarity he had not then suspected. He suffered when he recalled these things, and was ashamed of himself, and he was afraid.

That morning, before the rigid body and the icy features of the dead, he began to think with sincere and tender emotion: "My mother . . . whom I never knew, whom I never saw, to whom I never spoke . . ." Now he had to confess that, once at least during her lifetime, he had seen her and spoken to her, and that she herself. . . . And that this unhappy mother had said to him, with as much pity as of kindness: "My poor dear child! . . ."

During his whole lifetime she had addressed to him those four words, and those four words only: "My poor dear child . . ."

Gerard looked at the coffin with staring eyes, and Gerard lost his head.

And then, what attitude should he take henceforward, and

how should he behave in the presence of Marthe, who seemed to be so delicate? How should he approach her? Did she know of this abominable incident at Monte Carlo? Was Gerard not only going to become the tittle-tattle of the newspapers, but also to be looked upon as almost an ignoble coxcomb by this afflicted young girl and as undoubtedly contemptible by many others also, perhaps, in this Chateau of St. Genest?

For God's sake why did Count Gerard Lavergne come to Lille? To bury his mother? Well and good. Which it was his duty to do? Excellent. Understood. But . . . But. . . .

He remained for three or four hours plunged in a kind of wandering, of prostration. Of a truth the death chamber watched over him rather than the contrary.

As the night waned, Gerard heard the poplars trembling more. It suddenly became very cold. Then a kind of phantom appeared at the door. It was the old cousin from Lille. She seemed truly to be as livid as a ghost, after this too brief night. She whispered:

"I have come to take your place. It is time. Go and sleep in your turn. If you would like to rest here, you can. If not, your carriage is waiting. It is at the door and will take you back to your hotel at Lille."

"But, Madame, I can quite well stay here. It is no trouble. I am not so tired . . ." He spoke rather at hazard, and when she heard his kindly words the old woman began to soften also. She was accustomed to do so.

"Ah," she said, "let me pray near my dear old friend! I have scarcely ever been parted from her—just think of it! I helped her with her charities. I saw her every day. She never went away travelling, not once since she became a widow, without taking me with her!"

Gerard nearly bolted. Outside, as a matter of fact, an ancient vehicle, drawn by a horse that was too small for it, waited in the twilight of the dawn. It moved off slowly towards dull and dead Lille.

Arrived at the hotel, the driver had to knock on the sash of the door with his whip: "Now, sir, here we are!" It was not that Gerard was asleep, but he was no longer conscious of anything; he was drunk with uncertainty and sadness.

VIII

In the hotel Gerard's room was chilly with the dawn. He had himself opened the shutters before leaving the night before. It was an ordinary great hotel room, already hostile and ugly, about which languished the pale light of the new day, than which is there anything more repulsive, more livid and glacial, whitish and glaucous at the same time? One might believe oneself in the interior of a dead Medusa, from which the heart had been removed.

Gerard placed his hat upon the table. A little square of white paper stood out in the middle of the discoloured carpet, against the dressing table.

"Now what can that be?" thought Gerard, with a veritable movement of hatred against this unexpected paper.

Now it was a letter from a certain Duval-Réault, a war-time comrade of Gerard, who lived at Roubaix, where he owned some large factories. President of the racing association at Lille, a member of several Paris clubs, the principal organiser of the Roubaix Horse Show, Gaston Duval-Réault was nevertheless recognised as a very good fellow. He joked fraternally with the multi-millionaires or at any rate flattered himself that he did. He was on familiar terms with the dukes, or thought he was. With Gerard, a well-known personage, he recalled with an affectionate voice their souvenirs of the front, and especially when there were other people present.

"Duval-Réault," mused Gerard, "I had quite forgotten him. He lives here, of course: but how is it he is not at Deauville? . . . Roubaix in August! . . ."

That anyone should be obliged to appear every day in the office of a factory, even sometimes in summer, and not only appear there but also spend long hours at work between the telephone and the shorthand clerk, was something that Gerard could not conceive without a good deal of trouble. He knew that things happened in this way from time to time, or even somewhat frequently, but he had to reflect before he could realise that it was so.

My dear Lavergne (ran the letter): I understand that you are in Lille. I am aware that a painful affair

has called you into our district. Madame Acrambelle, I am told, was a relative of yours; I send you my sincere condolences. I shall be coming to the funeral tomorrow, however, when I shall be able to express my regrets to you personally. If you intend to remain for a short time in Lille, I shall be very glad to shake your hand, and to have lunch with you in strict privacy, unless your mourning forbids. Best wishes from your old comrade,

GASTON DUVAL-REAULT.

Really! And under the pretext of having been his old comrade during the war, this Duval-Réault, whom Gerard met perhaps half a dozen times a year, at the Horse Show in Paris, at the races or at the club, this swaggerer, this country squire claimed then to lunch with him, on the excuse that he was attending a neighbour's funeral? And what for? In the hope, probably, of being able to get something out of him, as they say.

In order to make him admit what relationship really existed between the young Count Lavergne, whose name was constantly appearing in the social columns of the newspapers, and this good Madame Acrambelle, famous in Lille for her good works; in order afterwards to be able to go chattering about Paris and to spread humorous remarks and blackguardly *sous-entendus* on the subject of a rather strange question of birth, which would be fatal to a reputation hitherto unsoiled, and even exquisite, people would add. When this ridiculous Duval-Réault did not intend to be malicious, he was none the less given to chattering, in order to pose as being well informed in regard to the seamy side of Parisian society.

He had evidently already begun to suspect the mystery —or what Gerard had up to the present believed to be a mystery — seeing that everybody at St. Genest appeared to know something about it, and consequently all Lille, Roubaix, Tourcoing and the rest of the department. After that it would be sufficient for Duval-Réault to notice the discreet regards that would be cast upon his comrade at the funeral—even if they were really discreet—for him

no longer to have a shade of uncertainty in regard to "the Lavergne affair."

The uneasy Gerard, even if he had not been a philosopher but merely a man of common sense, might have realised that his friend Duval-Réault, detained in the middle of August in his factories, would be horribly bored at Roubaix, far from horses, far from the ladies, far from the personages customarily depicted by Sem, far from the dukes, far from everything and everybody. A Count Lavergne happened to arrive, and, what was more, to arrive from Deauville! What a windfall, whatever the cause of his visit might be! Quick, one must have lunch with such a man! . . . But it seemed that the Parisian had come for a funeral—that of the excellent Madame Acrambelle. Very well, Duval-Réault would go to this funeral, to which he had been asked, *parbleu,* like everybody else in the district! The deceased lady was probably not so closely related to Gerard that it would be unbecoming to ask him to lunch. If he were mistaken, the invitation would merely fall to the ground, that was all. . . . Duval-Réault might easily have argued thus—and not so badly after all.

The distracted illegitimate son of Madame Acrambelle, however, was no longer capable of considering two possible solutions of the same problem — if ever he had been. His mind saw nothing but the blackest aspects of the situation, which were evidently those entertained by the impudent Duval-Réault. No, Gerard would not accept this sly and perfidious invitation from Duval-Réault. He would not even reply to it—into the waste-paper basket with it! And tomorrow, when they met at the funeral. . . .

Tomorrow? It was not tomorrow, but today even, this morning, within the next seven or eight hours, that he would have to encounter the suspicious looks of a whole heap of Duval-Réaults, and then the pitying looks of the ladies from the Christian Coöperative Society, the secret condolences of a provincial horde, of a crowd devoured by curiosity, among whom there would infallibly be a swarm of journalists.

Here again Gerard would have done better to reflect

that Lille, Roubaix and Turcoing—which he thought of as being like the three heads of the monstrous Cerberus —are enormous cities, amid which Madame Acrambelle, wealthy and charitable as she had been during her life, would apparently be as little noticed as a cornflower in a field of wheat; that in addition there was little reason why Marthe Acrambelle should allow herself to reveal a secret that would cause a scandal in her own immediate circle; that the Abbé was bound to the deepest secrecy, both by decency and by duty; and that with these exceptions everybody else was probably ignorant of the whole of the facts, that in reality they had merely greeted Gerard with old-fashioned French politeness, the first obligation of which would be not to put undesirable and uninvited questions.

But Count Lavergne, the optimistic, who made a great splash at Deauville, felt himself grievously pessimistic, persecuted, weak and humiliated at Lille. His thoughts were only pitiful and absurd ones. Moreover, what did he know about Lille and its surroundings? How could a man like him know anything of the manufacturing towns and the factory districts, where there is neither shooting nor chateaux, neither beaches nor watering places, neither winter sports nor polo? Gerard knew London, Cairo, Dinard, Pau, the Cote d'Azur, St. Moritz, the Lido and the Roman palaces, but Lille, good heavens!

Lille where, even in August—at daybreak, it is true, and after sitting up all night with a corpse—it was so cold! The poor lad even in his hotel bedroom was nearly shivering. He felt himself, moreover, overcome, dead from fatigue and emotion, weighed down by all kinds of shame and disgust. Marthe Acrambelle wanted to see him during the day, to talk to him about the dear departed; but he found himself so disconcerted and, in sum, so dominated by this afflicted girl, to whom he did not know how to speak—he, Count Gerard Lavergne!—that the interview was torturing him in advance. Then there was this deplorable old Monte Carlo story. . . . Who knew whether his half-sister did not know all about it? In that case he would rather die at once, or run away, disappear! . . . Gerard allowed himself to fall into a chair. And he slept.

He woke some three hours later, completely bruised and benumbed. He looked mechanically at himself in the glass: what a swollen face and hollow cheeks, what a wretched complexion; and then his clothes, all crumpled through having been slept in! . . . Gerard rang for the waiter.

The man arrived only half-awake, yet filled with secret respect, because the valise belonging to No. 74—which was the number of Gerard's room—and the contents of his dressing bag were of good quality. If they did not necessarily imply a good tip, they at least justified one in hoping for one.

"It is very early," said Gerard, "too early for a bath, I suppose?"

"Oh, no, sir! There is hot water from five in the morning."

"Excellent. Good hotel! And is there anybody, by chance, who could press my trousers for me?"

"Don't you worry, sir—I'll do it myself! I know how to do them."

Gerard drew on his pyjamas and moved off to the bathroom.

The waiter, whose time was his own this morning and who had read the name of a good English tailor on Gerard's clothes, set to work on Gerard's clothes. Three-quarters of an hour later he brought back the trousers pressed stiff as a board, shining boots and finally some very hot chocolate, which positively smelt like chocolate.

"Having risen so early," he said with his most engaging manner, "Monsieur is probably taking the 7.50 train for Paris?"

What was it that happened, in the space of a lightning flash, in Gerard's brain? He now felt himself washed, fresh, a thousand miles from Lille and the lowly people at St. Genest. That house of mourning had left with him an impression of fever and indescribable discomfort. The photograph album confusedly resembled a kind of pillory. And then there was this funeral directly, the day that had to be got through, Marthe Acrambelle and her glowing eyes, that saw too perspicaciously. . . .

As a matter of fact, was it absolutely necessary that he should either go to the church or to the cemetery? No, seeing that his name was not mentioned anywhere in the *lettres de faire-part,* or formal invitations, that had been sent out. Were they, by any chance, going to place him with the rest of the family?

The 7.50 would land him in Paris early in the afternoon. All that was necessary was to throw a few scattered objects into the bag, and ten minutes later everything was ready. . . .

Lille? Well, Gerard had seen it, the great northern city, and he was certainly never coming back to it.

His mother? . . . Alas, his mother! It was in very good faith, and with the deepest sincerity that he had felt himself trembling with emotion before the dear cold head on the funeral pillow. Why add to this emotion the intolerable vicissitudes of a ceremony, during which Gerard could only furnish ground for scandalous astonishment—unless he mingled, totally unknown, in the crowd, and then who would be surprised not to have seen him?

Abbé Meunynck? At any rate Gerard had hastened to Lille in response to a mere telephone call. Was he expected to do anything more in order to satisfy this exigent priest?

There remained Marthe. . . . Good heavens, she was charming and interesting, this unhappy little girl. Her secret brother wished her every happiness possible. She also had assuredly touched his heart at a most sensitive point. Like Lille, however, he would never see her again that was almost certain. . . .

In addition, a nightmare now haunted him—the history of La Maréchale! What a piece of luck that Marthe had never learned anything about it, that she had merely allowed Gerard to guess the facts!

"Did you say the train leaves at 7.50?" he asked the waiter.

"Yes, sir—in less than a full hour. Shall I order the omnibus?"

Gerard heard himself echo the reply: "Yes, order the omnibus."

It was done, then . . . Well, so be it! One must know how to act as a man, and not be a sniveller attacked with sensitiveness and therefore with incurable weakness. Gerard added firmly:

"And bring me the bill."

Eight o'clock had not struck when Count Gerard Lavergne watched from the window of his carriage the dreary houses of Lille slip by. . . .

Down there at St. Genest Marthe Acrambelle was praying. She prayed for the eternal repose of her passionately loved mother, but at the same time she thanked God for having given her a mysterious and hitherto unknown brother, at the most painful hour of her martyr's life. "I am evil born, O my God," she said fervently, "and Thou hast made me suffer, but this time, at least, Thou hast had pity on me and a gleam of tenderness has again shone for me. Blessed be Thy Providence, O my God! Our Father which art in heaven . . ."

IX

At Deauville races, in the meantime, Olivier Sibourt was on this very day wishing good-bye to Marcelle Pirenne who, in her flowered gown, had all the freshness of a May morning.

"Then you are going?" she said. "Why? No more money?"

"Exactly! If literary prizes were inexhaustible, there would be no more work done. You did not know that? What did they teach you at the convent? . . . Then, I am going because I suffer."

"Another wretched woman, I bet you!"

"You have won—you are the wretched woman! What a heavily loaded conscience you must have! You dare not show it to me. . . . Now, is it Christianity to reject, as you have done, a poor lad who loves you and wants only to caress you? An innocent writer, modest and perfectly well dressed? You cannot imagine the things I wear underneath, my dearest. . . . And all that for

what? For a fellow who has thrown you over. For where is he, your Lavergne? Where has he been during the past forty-eight hours? Flown away? Carried off?"

"Is that any business of yours?"

"I should think so! My rival! . . . Now, remember what I have said. You will get tired of your Gerard. One day, one fine day, you will suddenly realise that he is only a great big boy . . ."

"What, again? If you call that joking, I prefer you when you cry."

"Very well, I will cry because I am leaving you. Does that please you? . . . Au revoir, Marcelle. I am leaving this evening. Think of me as nicely as you can. I shall come and see you in Paris, if you will let me."

Marcelle Pirenne sulkily held out her hand. Let him go, after all, this maniacal and manifestly envious being: bon voyage!

Nevertheless, as he was regarded as being very intelligent, the young woman asked him once more:

"Listen: I think what you say about Gerard is absolutely stupid, but as you insist on still saying it, tell me exactly what you mean by—that silly expression—which is not more suitable to him than an apron would be to a hen . . ."

"What, 'a great big boy'?"

"Why are you so bent on applying that phrase to him? What relation has it to Gerard?"

Olivier Sibourt, thus consulted, assumed the air of the most professional of psychologists; that is to say, that his eyes became attentive and serious, while his mouth smiled slyly, which is the proper rite:

"Count Gerard Lavergne," he said, "talks too loudly. Then, one would believe him, to look at him, to be tired of seduction, which one would say disgusts him in advance. Now, I have observed that with such people a very little often upsets them. They are people who in such circumstances ride roughshod over the weak in order to get themselves out of difficulties. Rather than handle Venetian glass carefully, they smash everything, like true peasants. In this way it so happens that the charming

gigolo proves, either through laziness or distractedness, to be nothing but a boor."

Olivier Sibourt would have gone on discoursing for a long time in the shadows of the trees, but he noticed that Marcelle Pirenne had tears in her eyes, and changed the subject to that of the next race.

THE FATHER AND SON

By PAUL BOURGET

(From *Lectures Pour Tous*)

I

"MADAME JULES PREVERAND, 29 rue du Peintre-Lebrun, Versailles.

Father died this morning eight o'clock. All my sympathy to you and Michette. Your respectful son, Augustin Préverand."

After writing the telegram, the young man stayed, leaning with his elbow on the table, for a long time. Now he looked at what he had just written, now at the bed on which the man whose death he announced lay rigid, his eyes closed, his hands crossed over a crucifix.

Should he send the telegram or not? His grievous hesitation summed up a long and cruel family tragedy which had swallowed up his entire youth. He was barely nineteen years old; for the last twelve years his father and mother had been separated, the son going to the father, the daughter, Michelle, to the mother. He called her Michette, a name he had invented when they were children, before relations were severed.

The real causes of the separation Augustin scarcely knew. He knew, however, from his father's actual confession, that the latter had been guilty in the first place. Guilty of what? Of brutality? That was only too evident, if his father spoke the truth. But the latter's confidences stopped short there, nor was there anything exact enough to allow the son even to suspect the details of the scenes that had deprived him of a parent. Although quite inexperienced, it was enough for him to watch his father's daily life in order to realise that this personage with his haughty mien, his imperious eyes fringed with heavy lashes and his intentionally brusque gestures could not have been an agreeable companion in the daily intimacies of married life.

A sportsman, given to violent exercise, riding, fencing, tennis and hunting made up his existence. Moreover, he was occasionally irritable, sometimes to the point of fury. Was it fear of his own violence forbade him to touch a drop of alcohol? He drank nothing but water. What would have become of him drunk, this man who one day in an access of anger threw a servant who had failed him downstairs? And—Augustin was touched as he recalled the contrast now—this man of excesses, this Hotspur, had been for his son the most attentive of educators, ever interested in the boy's intellectual and moral development. He had kept him at home under the tutorship of a carefully selected master, insisting upon a daily report of the boy's progress. As a day-student, Augustin had attended a religious school at Neuilly. To assure him a healthier air, his father had come to live in the Boulevard Maillot, on the fringe of the Bois de Boulogne. During the holidays he took him on a cruise or to Scotland during the grouse season, or to the Engadine for mountain climbing, finding a means to combine his own tastes with the building up of his son's health.

Consequently the young man, receiving such constant solicitude, had adored this father whose temperament was so unlike his own. To be sure, both of them possessed some of those analogies that exist in families: the horse-like chiselling of their features, eyes and hair of the same color, a certain way of holding up their heads. But though the one, even after fifty, remained energetic and robust, the other, in spite of fencing and gymnasium lessons, boxing and horseback riding, was still a frail and nervous adolescent. He had been conceived and borne by his mother while she lived in fear of her husband. That was the deep-rooted reason—he knew as little about it as about his parents' past—why his mother had always kept herself at such a distance from him when he went to see her at the different intervals arranged by the conventions of this semi-divorce. He represented too vividly for Madame Préverand the husband whose memory always renewed in her a physical terror—the most animal but the most unalterable of impressions on a feminine organism once possessed of it. She had had the delicacy never to speak to the young man

about the incident that had prompted her separation. But she certainly was not fond of him, and he knew it all too well from the coldness of her welcome, from the cautious reserve of his sister—his sister who was but a year older than himself.

The girl, however, really loved him, with a tenderness like that of their distant youth, when they breathed the same air, played the same games and slept under the same roof. But she dared not show it when their mother was present. This was always the case: Madame Préverand was evidently bent upon preventing any intimacy between them. Strangely enough, as though a like anomaly of heart occurred simultaneously in husband and wife, Michelle Préverand never came to Neuilly to visit her father without the latter imposing his presence upon the young people. The brother, too, concealed his passionate friendship for Michette before this witness who made no secret of his antipathy for his daughter, because she lived with her mother. Imaginative and sensitive as he was, young Augustin had suffered from this situation. It grew worse year by year, as though time, instead of healing the wound of hatred in the parents' hearts, revived it and envenomed it the more. He had observed it. Each of his visits to Versailles was more difficult than the last. Nowadays he let long intervals lapse between them. His sister, for the same motives, had given up her visits altogether. They scarcely wrote to each other, each being unwilling to complain of a parent beloved of the other. By avoiding each other, they escaped, by tacit agreement, from emotions that would have been too sad. . . .

And then a brutal event occurred. Jules Préverand, coming back from the races at Chantilly in an open car, was drenched to the skin by a sudden rain storm. Bronchitis resulted, which developed into pneumonia. During the two weeks of his father's illness, Augustin had thought of warning his mother. But he had not followed out the idea. A final conversation with his father had revealed to him too well the depth of the dying man's aversion. But now that this ardent and passionate man was no more than an inert and forever insensible form, the brother's tenderness towards his sister

could no longer give offence. He needed Michette so much, especially at the funeral! Did he know Michelle's intimate and real sentiments towards her father? At any rate was it not her right to be given a chance to pay this supreme homage to the dead man? Augustin had followed that impulse as he wrote out the telegram. But to warn his sister was to warn his mother. He glanced towards the bed once more. He seemed to hear the voice that was now hushed, calling him. He could see the bitterness of the lips, under the gray mustache.

"Augustin . . .?"

"Yes, Father!"

"You haven't told the lady of Versailles? . . ."

"No, Father."

"I don't want her around at my funeral, do you understand?"

"I don't want her!" the young man was repeating now as he looked at his telegram. "But he said nothing about Michette! And he would have if. . . . Oh, no! One must be generous . . . one must be human!"

He moved to ring the bell, but he shook his head, and did not press the button. Taking the telegram form from the table, he went out of the room. He would order them to take the telegram to the office immediately. He had not wanted to give it to the servant in the presence of the dead man.

II

Night had fallen. Having written such other telegrams or letters as were immediately necessary, Augustin ate a hurried meal in the dining room opposite the empty place the master would never again occupy. Then he returned to the death chamber.

"Go and rest," he ordered the servant and the nurse. "We will take turns sitting up. I shall begin!"

His desire to stay alone with the dead man was not without motive. The words that had made him hesitate to send the telegram to his mother were not the only ones the dying man had spoken. There were others that came

back to him, word for word, as he sat there now at the foot of the bed. They resounded through his mind and heart still, with the solemn accent of a voice about to be hushed. How could he resist his last prayer? And yet how could he obey it, when its purpose was to prolong forever a hatred that should not survive the perishable flesh?

The dying man had asked this supreme boon before the priest's arrival. Having received the ultimate sacrament, was he not about to retract when, with a gesture, he had beckoned his son? Then his voice had failed him, he had been unable to revoke instructions of such precision that they allowed neither equivocation nor delay:

"My boy," he had said, from that very bed, fifteen short hours ago, "take this key!" With feverish hand he had taken the ring of keys from the drawer of the *table-de-nuit,* and had isolated a flat one.

"It belongs to my strong box. The box is there, built into the wall, in the cupboard of my dressing room. It works by means of four springs, with letters on them. The combination word is *Augu,* the first part of your name. In the lowest drawer you will find two envelopes. The large canvas one contains 500,000 francs in banknotes. I give them to you. The other envelope—a small one—has my will in it. According to this will, I am leaving you all of my fortune that the law allows me to. I wish it were my entire wealth. Unfortunately, I can't do that. At least, after having read this will, you will know why I do not wish your sister to benefit by it on the same terms as yourself. She took her mother's part against her father . . ."

"But I assure you," Augustin had protested.

"Let me speak," the dying man had insisted, as he made a gesture showing he had reached the end of his strength. "I hold nothing against her. It was quite natural that, living with her mother as she did, she should prefer her to me. But it is equally natural that I for my part should not consider her as my daughter. You are really my child, my real son: I have moulded your mind and heart. And anyhow, I have worked it out. The part that is to be yours will not be beyond what belongs to me alone, the money I inherited from my poor friend Perron-Duménil. He liked

you very much, too, if you remember. In giving you this money I am taking nothing from the family. With the five hundred thousand and the rest of the money you will have almost two million. That will be enough to keep this house going, to enter into the diplomatic service under the best of conditions, if you still feel the same way, and to marry well later on. I wish you better luck in your choice than I had."

He had made a few recommendations regarding his funeral, a few current accounts and several mementos.

"You will obey me, Augustin?" he had concluded.

"I will obey you, Father," the young man answered.

"In every way? You heard me . . . in every way . . . even about the funeral . . ."

"In every way," Augustin had stammered.

"Thank you," the father said as he handed him the keys. And, scarcely able to articulate now, "Take the banknotes at once, before they set the seals. . . . Because she will have everything sealed."

"I shall take them, Father!"

The moment had come to fulfill his promise. Just as before he had trembled on sending the telegram, now Augustin trembled at the idea of opening the strong box.

"*After having read this will, you will know . . .*" What would he know? His father had immediately concluded the phrase in a way that pointed solely to his other child.

But why had he insisted so on repeating: "You are my *real* son!" Was Augustin going to find in this will a revelation damaging his mother's honor? ". . . better luck in your choice . . ." Was the question purely one of incompatibility of character, as Augustin had always thought? Young and innocent as he was, he was not unaware that in the lives of men and women there were often melancholy secrets that their sons and daughters were the last to discover. Was it a sorrow of this sort that had set upon the dying man the mark of such infinite sadness?

How tragic his father's features appeared in their ultimate state of relaxation! What bitterness in the curve of his mouth! What an inexpressible rancor still dominated this forehead, hollowed by wrinkles! How deep his grievance

against his wife must have rankled in his heart, for him to strike at mother and daughter with such bitterness! And yet he had loved her when he had married her, and she with no dowry! Augustin had only to contrast his father's household with the apartment at Versailles to realise that Madame Préverand, reduced to her own circumstances and even with the allowance her husband had certainly given her, possessed only a middle-class competence and no more.

What was the key to this riddle? He knew his father was a just and good man. He had seen him perform the most spontaneous and generous actions towards relatives in trouble, poor people, old servants, even old horses. The money his old crony, Perron-Duménil, had left him and his emotion when he mentioned him proved that he was capable of inspiring deep affection, too. Perron-Duménil, Augustin had known well indeed. He was honor and delicacy itself; and people have the friends they deserve.

What accusation was the son of Madame Préverand and the brother of Michette going to find in the strong box? What accusation that might end by forever poisoning relations already so strained? Well, but these two women were all his family.

"What a coward I am!" he said to himself finally. Then rising, he turned towards the dead man, "You see I am obeying you," he added aloud. And he was already in the dressing room, next to the bedroom. What a contrast between the pale flame of the candles that had shed a glimmer over his funeral vigil a few moments ago and the burst of light that flooded the room as soon as he turned the switch. The toilet articles that the man about town had used were near the washstand and the bathtub. These indications of a luxurious and easy life were scarcely in keeping with such profound passions as the dying man's vindictive determination had betokened. The frivolous background gave an even more sinister character to the contrary sentiments that had been portrayed.

"Poor father!" Augustin could not help murmuring. He was moved by a new contrast—one of entirely moral order this time—in spite of his anxiety. The first four letters of his name chosen as the Open Sesame of the strong box!

There was an almost childish but a very tender affection about the detail. His hand shook as he turned the springs until he formed the word *Augu,* and his fingers trembled as he put the key in. The lock turned. He pushed the door open.

Augustin found the large envelope, swollen with the bundles of bills. He brushed it aside and took up the other, the thin one, on which Jules Préverand had affixed his name in his large handwriting, so characteristic with its determined strokes and the decided crossing of the t's.

"For my dear son Augustin, after my death!"

The young man tore the envelope open, drew out the enclosed sheet. He noted that all four sides of the paper were covered with that same handwriting. In it he saw his father living, active. He read it.

III

My Last Will and Testament. This is my last will and testament written in my own hand, November 23, 1910, in full possession of my faculties, but perhaps on the eve of death. I am feeling very ill. My former will, made some years ago, was not sufficiently explicit. My son was still a child. I still had grounds for hope that Madame Préverand might at last understand her duty towards him and towards myself and towards our daughter as well. She has not done so. This document will tell what the other did not and what Augustin must know.

I appoint him, my son, Augustin Préverand, my residuary legatee.

His sister, Michelle Préverand, will receive for her portion strictly no more than a code violating the most sacred of liberties, that of the father of a family, forces me to bequeath to her. I have too much to blame Madame Préverand for, not to suffer my rigor to reach out to her daughter though that daughter was also mine. Her mother, *I know very well,* has brought her up in sentiments of hostility towards me. It is right that she should be punished through the child whom she wished to love her alone.

For this reason, I wrote above that she *was* my daughter. I consider her as such no longer. Her mother has alienated her heart from me. Michelle has not found, in the memory of the love I gave her in her childhood, sufficient strength to resist her mother's dominion. So much the worse for her. I wish this testament, which will be read by my son only at my death, to be a proof. I am going to relate in strict and complete sincerity the incident which determined my separation from Madame Préverand. That in the course of the nine years of our married life I was despotic, difficult to live with, unjustly jealous, I do not deny. No more do I deny that one day I committed an action which makes me ashamed, terribly ashamed now I am about to confess it. That very shame proves my repentance deserved forgiveness. I was gambling heavily at that time and it worried my wife. Gossiping friends kept her informed with exaggerations of my baccarat losses which they had learned from their husbands, fellow members of my club. If I lost a hundred thousand francs at the tables, that was all: not a penny more. Unfortunately after these games and when I stayed on late at the club I often happened to take supper with friends there and to drink more than was reasonable. One evening I had lost a great deal. I was excited and I threw good money after bad. Did this excitement render me more liable to the intoxication of alcohol? I do not think I drank more than my usual allowance of champagne and brandy. But it was winter. I was bitterly cold when I left the club. To get warm I stopped at a restaurant and drank some more brandy. In short, I was drunk when I opened the door of the apartment. Unfortunately, Madame Préverand had not yet gone to bed. She had gone out that night to a party and there one of my friends from the club had told her casually, without bad intent, that he had just left me holding the bank in the midst of a run of bad luck. I have since boxed the fellow's ears and given him a nice wound in a duel. Madame Préverand—and I cannot blame her for it—was worried about her children's future. She was waiting for me in order to question me on the outcome of the game, and, in case I had lost, to ascertain the extent of my losses.

I answered her only-too-well-deserved reproaches with words of anger. She stood up to me. I struck her so violently that she fell to the ground.

At this point I had so lost my head that I left her without bothering any more about her. I went to bed. The next morning I woke out of my brutish stupor—I use the term advisedly—with a heavy head and my memory blurred. I recalled the terrible scene of the eve, as one does a bad dream.

I was soon to know its horrible reality. Madame Préverand had left the house with her daughter, leaving no address—not even a note! She had taken her maid with her, leaving with a trunk as though for a few days' journey.

"She will come back," I told myself as I learned this detail. "I will ask her pardon and she will forgive me when she sees this paper!"

I sat down at my desk and wrote the following words, dating them appropriately. *"I swear on my honor never to touch a card or to drink a drop again."* My remorse at my violence was so great that I remember standing before a looking-glass after having signed this pledge and insulting my reflection. I only mention this puerile fact in order to attest how eager I was to grant any conditions the mother of my children might have imposed upon me. I expected these conditions with the firm determination to obey them. The voice of Augustin asking me: "Father, where has Mother gone?" increased my consciousness of my guilt. He added: "What was the matter with her? She was crying?"

"Yes," I repeated, just like the child, "where has she gone?"

Certainly I was very much to blame. But I was already being punished by the thought that rose in me suddenly: "What if she has killed herself?"

There was, in the depths of her character, something impenetrable. It was that very personal independence which always exasperated me in our dissensions. Selfish natures are capable, we all know, of extreme resolutions. My mind still unbalanced from my drunkenness of the day before, I abandoned myself to the sinister imagining of a double

suicide: she and my child! I visualised them in a hotel room, bathed in their blood, and beside their bodies, a revolver that Madame Préverand always kept on the mantel. Since, I have realised she did so in terror of me. I went so far in my madness as to go into her room in order to make sure whether she had taken the weapon with her or not. She had not. Just as I ascertained this fact, the footman informed me my father-in-law wished to speak to me. I have imputed sufficient wrongs to myself to be justified in being equally hard on all of them for their injustice. My wife's parents in the first place, and then my wife. She had taken refuge at Versailles under their roof. My father-in-law had come on her behalf to tell me she had decided not to return. Was he justified when I cried repentance, when I gave him my pledge never to gamble or drink again, was he justified, I say, in shrugging his shoulders and answering: "I do not believe you and I think my daughter is quite right!" And she, the mother of my children, was she justified in not believing in my remorse, in not even allowing me to express it to her? The request I made my father-in-law for an interview with her, I renewed ten times during the weeks that followed. The answer transmitted through others was always, "No, no, no."

What letters she received from me then! What trials did I not offer to undergo? How I implored her not to break up our home, to give me a chance to redeem myself, to wipe it all out, for the sake of the children! To wipe out what? The memory of one instant during which I was not responsible! To a man who has committed a murder in drunkenness, the courts allow extenuating circumstances. But with her it was *"No,"* always *"No."*

Then there began for me a life whose long tribulation allows me to affirm that the punishment went beyond the crime. No home any longer. My daughter lost to me, lost to her brother, too, since—and that is my greatest reproach to Madame Préverand—she set herself to prevent any affection between the two children. The means she used I do not know, but I understood her ends only too well. Our son, for her, was my son, and as I particularly wish to say

everything here, I must confess I finished by feeling just as she did.

Today, our daughter, her daughter, is nothing to me any longer. Her implacable mother has throttled the father in me. One gesture would have sufficed for the father to be born once more in my heart. That gesture neither she nor her daughter was willing to make. I do not hold it against Michelle. But against Madame Préverand, I do.

Repentance, when proven, earns a right to forgiveness. I proved my repentance in the first place by adhering scrupulously to the promise I had made. All my friends at the club can bear witness to this: I never gambled again. My son, who has taken almost every meal with me during the last twelve years, can testify to my abstinence from wine or alcohol.

I also accepted—which amounts to recognising my fault —all the separation clauses determined by Madame Préverand and her parents. All I asked was that there be no divorce because of the children. Was that not also a proof that I was not the abject creature she refused to meet? It did away from the very outset with any chances I might have had of recreating a family-interior for myself. I had asked Madame Préverand herself to stipulate what allowance she wished me to make her and her daughter. If the figure was no higher, it is because she wished it so. What a message I received in answer to my offer! "My daughter," her father told me for her, "does not wish to receive anything from you. She asks only for what is necessary for Michelle's education." But what is the use of insisting on memories which even today, after the lapse of so many years, are gall and wormwood to me? I have said enough about them for my son to have no scruple about executing my last wishes. For the last twelve years he has been my only joy in life, my consolation in my loneliness, my reason for respecting myself, the living proof that Madame Préverand, by condemning me without appeal for a youthful aberration, has been supremely unjust.

My fault was great, but it was a fault of flesh and blood. It was not a fault arising from the depths of the soul. By refusing me the gesture of forgiveness to which, I repeat, I

was entitled by my atonement, and for which I waited so long, Madame Préverand has been guilty, I repeat again, of a crime of pride against myself and the children.

I wanted my son to know this. So be it.

IV

At the bottom of this terrible document, Jules Préverand had written his signature, had indicated the place where he had written it, and had repeated the date: November 23, 1910, already stated in the opening sentence in order to cut short any litigation. Today was the eighth of December. It had been drawn up two weeks ago. Augustin remembered the circumstance. At that time his father had received several visits from an old college friend, who was a broker, in order, no doubt, to consult this confidant about selling his stock. This explained the huge reserve of money, the five hundred thousand francs in the strong box. Thus it did not come under the provisions of the Inheritance Laws, against which he rebelled. "Take the banknotes at once before she has the seals affixed," his father had said. Augustin took the heavy envelope from the strong box, but with a sort of horror, tossed it back again. He pushed the door back without turning the spring, so great was his emotion. Then he returned to the death chamber with the testament in his hand. He would read it beside the remains of the passionate man who had used him, an innocent person, as the instrument of his vengeance. Its sorrow agreed all too well with the desolate confession he held between his clenched fingers. Before reading these pages he had been in mortal fear lest he discover some shameful secret about his mother. Now he ought to have felt relieved. She had been an honest woman. For if she had not—with what fierce joy her mortal enemy would have exposed her to her son's contempt! An honest woman, yes, but what a hard woman! Memories rose to Augustin's mind. His father dining alone with him when he was a child and raising his glass full of water with a sinister smile. His father questioning him when he returned from his visits to Versailles, speaking to him about his sister, and if the child said "Michette" as he used to, correcting him almost angrily: "Don't call her by that

ridiculous name!" His sister arriving at Neuilly with her governess and so obviously ill at ease, so nervous and so badly received. And he, the brother, scarcely daring to look at her. When he went to see his mother, how was he received? Not a question about his father's health, not a word about his studies. The dead man was right. Madame Préverand had been too hard. In refusing her forgiveness with such inexorable obstinacy, she had committed a crime of pride. In justification of his father, Augustin repeated that sentence in his will: "One gesture would have sufficed for the father to be born again in my heart . . ."

Then, recalling his telegram:

"Ah!" he thought, "how right it was of me to hesitate! I should not have sent the telegram before the funeral. Supposing she wants to come to it, how can I stop her? And I promised . . . But no: she will not want to come. Then I owe it to Michette to let her know. For after all, he was her father and she would have loved him if. . . Oh, why did he want me to read all that in his will? And those orders about his funeral! . . . No, she will send Michette alone. She won't come. . . . Otherwise she would have telegraphed."

Augustin, already emotional by nature, had been rendered still more sensitive by the abnormal life his parents led as they fought each other through their children. He was not one to believe what he hoped. He attempted to interpret his mother's silence in a favorable light. Then he concluded the contrary: namely, that she would come.

He was therefore not surprised when the following morning the valet, awakening him from sleep—he had been thoroughly exhausted by the emotions of his vigil—told him:

"Mademoiselle Michelle is downstairs asking for you, sir!"

"Is she alone?"

"No, sir, there is a lady with her."

"Her governess?"

"No, sir, another lady . . ."

The servant was obviously embarrassed. The other visitor was Madame Préverand: he had guessed it.

"Very good," said Augustin. "Show the ladies into the drawing room at once. Light a fire in there. And make my excuses to them for not coming at once: tell them I shall be ready in a few minutes!"

So his mother had come, just as he had feared! Why, having been merciless towards her husband in life, had she not understood she should not appear at his death? And if she had come, would she not be there for the funeral, too? What was he to do, then? Should he obey the poor dead man and prevent her appearance? But Madame Préverand had not come alone. If she had accompanied her daughter, it was because the latter had asked her to do so. Because of whom? Because of him, Augustin, without a doubt. The girl must have thought the absence of their mother at such a moment would be too hard on her brother. It was one more proof of a tender and secret friendship. If Michette had acted as he supposed, where should he find strength to offend this friendship? Could he turn their mother away after Michette had perhaps had so much trouble in persuading her to come? But that the daughter brought the mother?

Augustin finished dressing. He placed the wallet in which he had put the will last night in his coat pocket. The sight of the paper peeping out over the leather determined a sudden association of ideas in him: "That is why she is here. My sister and I are joint heirs: she knows it and she wants to find out exactly how things stand."

In young people who have not known through experience the hard necessities of life, there is an instinctive repugnance for the mingling of matters of interest with sentiment. To think that at the moment of his father's death his mother should have thought of business was odious to him.

"If that's her point," he thought again, "she will want to speak to me alone. I shall tell her my father's wishes. I could not do that in front of my sister."

This offered him a comparatively easy means of acquitting himself of his mission, but it did not prevent a wave of bitterness from sweeping through his heart. After he had entered the drawing room and a few moments had elapsed, Madame Préverand said to her daughter:

"My child, go and pray at your father's bedside. Augustin, take her to him!"

And yet, during the few moments before she spoke, the young man had known the most tender of feelings. His sister had embraced him with such genuine spontaneous affection! She had not hidden her love for him this time and they had mingled their tears. It was not the dead man she wept for, but her brother and his pain. No matter: they were weeping together. Augustin was too strongly moved to take heed of the mother.

The contracted features of the latter bore out Augustin's suspicions all too well. How he had suffered a few moments ago when she had asked so drily: "How did it happen?" What was he going to tell her now? He left his sister on her knees at their father's bedside. Then he returned to the drawing room, firmly resolved to deliver his father's sad message. What words would she answer him with? Would he be able to hear them without revolting?

V

Madame Préverand had been a very beautiful woman. Though over forty, her features were still remarkably pure. Age marked her without disfiguring her. Her family was from the Provençal South, where the classic stamp still seems to persist in certain men and women, together with that cold firmness particular to the Roman genus. She was tall with very brown eyes under a somewhat low forehead. Her straight nose and haughty mouth made one want to strike her effigy on a medal. Threads of silver were beginning to blight her thick black braids of hair. Her complexion, of a dull whiteness, was rendered more pallid yet by the sombre shade of her gown, chosen to suit the occasion. She was indeed the woman whose pitiless pride was laid bare in her husband's will. There was nothing but obstinacy and severity and positive determination in her face. Coming to the point directly, no sooner had her son faced her:

"Augustin," she said, "you know well enough about the misunderstanding between your father and myself. You

must also recognise that ever since our separation was arranged and I took your sister to live with me, the safeguarding of her interests has been my constant duty."

The young man was thunderstruck at having guessed so accurately.

"Michelle," Madame Préverand continued, "is at a marriageable age. There is even a prospect in view; things are still up in the air but serious, none the less. I must know what disposition your father made."

She was studying him as she spoke, scrutinising him with inquisitorial eyes in which he thought he read a horrible distrust.

"You lived intimately with him; if he made such dispositions, doubtless he mentioned them to you."

"Yes, Mother, he did."

"Ah!" she said. "Can you tell me what he decided?"

"But, Mother——" he interrupted.

"There is no offence intended to you. If this will, as I imagine, favors you, it is quite natural that, if your father did not leave it at his lawyer's, you, knowing its contents, committed it to a safe place. Perhaps your father himself advised you to take this precaution. He loathed me so. He probably suspected me of wanting to destroy it!"

As she uttered these words with a toss of the head, her lips parted in a cruel smile of distrust and contempt. So the inexorable conjugal hatred that Augustin had seen possessing his father to his deathbed had not left his mother's heart either. The atrocious impression the reading of the document had made upon the young man returned to him once more with such intensity that he felt his throat contract. His voice was choking as he passed her the accusing paper, saying:

"You asked for it, Mother. Read it! Read!"

The corollary came to his lips: "Read and repent!" But he checked himself. It would have spoiled things irreparably! He had once again felt just how much his sister loved him. All his youth he had been thirsting for a normal family life. To be sure, he had known certain aspects of it with his father, but how incomplete they were! His sister, the Michette of their earliest games, of his first and

happiest years, remained to him. To quarrel with his mother meant losing her. He watched this dauntless mother take the will, unfold it and read it. She frowned, her fingers clutching the paper. The bitter sneer of a few moments ago came to her mouth once more and hardened it. He saw the most secret side of her being hating this man. Moved by horror at the rancor of this man and woman of whose flesh he was born, the spectacle was unbearable: he wanted to scream. One of them, his father, had gone without forgiving; or if, in the last minute at the priest's bidding he had wished to, it was too late. His voice and strength had failed him. This hideous execration must at all price be broken down, destroyed. Brother and sister must really become brother and sister, as in the days the nickname of Michette brought to mind. They must live together and grow old together, respecting their parents.

"One gesture would have sufficed for the father to be born again in my heart . . ." The moving sentence out of the will haunted him once more.

An inspiration flashed on him, one of those great waves of generosity, which, at certain hours, arise from the depths of the soul to sweep and carry everything headlong before them.

Madame Préverand was finishing the document. She folded it again as she might have folded any ordinary letter. Ironic contempt distorted her fine features.

"Very well," she said, handing him back the paper, "I know what I wanted to know. You cannot but think your father was in the right. I shall not stoop to defend myself. I did not believe in his repentance. Once you have seen a man in the state he was in that night, you never forget it! You cannot forget . . ."

A look of terror shone in her eyes. Terror of the brutality the dead man had confessed. Her lids closed down over it.

"I shall return to Versailles with Michelle. Put our names on the death notice if you think fit. I consider my presence at the funeral quite useless. I do not intend to oppose your father's will or to contest it. Moreover I do not consider you in any way responsible for its conditions. I shall not do you that wrong. I never condemn anyone

without being sure, very sure, indeed, that I am entirely justified."

This sentiment, once more reaffirming the legitimacy of her whole conduct was expressed with so pitiless a glance that Augustin felt himself freeze under it. But he had made up his mind. He would break up this hatred. He would keep his sister.

"Mother," he said, after having taken back the will, "you spoke to me of a marriage you were considering for Michette . . ."

"Yes," she agreed in surprise. Then correcting him, "A marriage I *had* thought of."

"And she is in love with the man in question?"

"In love . . . well, at any rate, she is extremely fond of him!" Madame Préverand answered.

Her expression had changed somewhat, but still there lingered in it a hostile distrust. She asked:

"Why do you want to know?"

"Do you suppose," he went on without answering her directly, "that a difference in the dowry? . . . You know you just said, 'That I *had* thought of . . .' "

"Stop, Augustin!" she interrupted quickly. "I forbid you to think I had an ulterior motive in coming to see you, or in anything I may have said. I came here merely for information."

And she repeated:

"I want nothing. Nothing at all."

"Ah! Mother!" he sighed. "For the first time in years how little you understand me!"

He walked over to the fireplace. A supple and generous flame burned from the fire the servant had lighted. Taking the will he thrust it into the flame. Sparks shot up. With the tongs, Augustin crushed the black heap of paper. Fragments of it flew up the chimney.

His mother watched him, motionless. When he rose, she was a prey to an emotion he had never before seen in her. His movements had been so quick and so spontaneous, such a glow shone on his face that his magnanimity proved inspiring, infectious. Employing an epithet she had never used during the long years:

"Augustin," she said, "my darling boy!"

She opened her arms. He came to her with a sob.

"Oh, my son!"

Then associating both children in one thought:

"For her sake, how can I thank you enough?"

"By coming in here!" he begged her.

He pointed to the door of the other room—where *he* lay.

He took her by the hand; she followed him; they entered the death-chamber. The girl was praying by the bedside.

"Kiss him, Mother," he begged again.

He watched her hesitate, then bend over the brow of the dead man. "One gesture would have sufficed . . ." Thus it was written in the testament. That gesture he had just made. A sacred emotion welled up in the heart of the young man. As he knelt beside his sister, he pressed her hand with ardor, murmuring in a low voice:

"Father, have I not done well? Do you not also forgive me?"

QUARTER POUND

By FREDERIC BOUTET

(From *Quart De Livre*)

HIS real name was Hector, but finding it far too grand for so small and puny a youngster, the people of the quarter in which he lived abbreviated it to Hecto. Then, one day, a drunken cobbler nicknamed him "Quarter Pound" by way of a pun, and after he was known by this name only.

His mother, a poor struggling seamstress, called herself Madame Sulau. Monsieur Sulau had met her when she was a slip of a girl of twenty, young and attractive, a fresh country maiden seeking a situation in Paris. Her life with him had not been too unhappy, but shortly after the birth of Quarter Pound, he died of typhoid fever.

For two years, then, this poor woman had lived alone, struggling so hard to maintain herself and the two children by stitching away at shirts. Hector scarcely knew what it was to be given toys and presents. Not even Christmas goodies came his way, for in this season his mother's task to provide food and fuel was harder than ever. When he was a very tiny boy she had managed to spare a few sous to buy him a small toy, a sugar stick or some oranges. When the little sister came, however, every sou was swallowed up in the effort to keep the two children from dying of hunger, and if by a miracle a trifle could be spared it was naturally spent on the younger child, Quarter Pound being considered too old to be spoiled.

Moreover, Quarter Pound was quite equal to the task of taking care of himself. He met all emergencies with the calm of an old philosopher. This little Paris urchin had learned many things in his wanderings about the city; he went along quite happily with his nose up in the air and his hands in his pockets.

On a certain Thursday, Quarter Pound got up very early,

dressed quickly, and slipped downstairs without disturbing his mother, who had worked very late the previous night, and was still sleeping by the side of his little sister.

As half-past six was striking he was just about to go into the street. He didn't go away, however, but waited before the door. The gloomy old walls were repainted by the early morning sun, while the pools of water in the gutters glistened. But Quarter Pound saw neither sunshine nor misery, he was all attention and expectation.

At last she came. A little girl dressed in white muslin. He made a movement to meet her, but she was already at his side.

"Good morning, Quarter Pound," she said sweetly. "Then you were waiting for me?"

"Yes, I wanted to see you first, just freshly dressed in your new white frock. But I say, you aren't half bad in your first communion rig out," he said in a bantering tone which ill-concealed his admiration.

"Really," said she, blushing with pleasure.

This little white-robed girl had been Quarter Pound's near neighbour for three years. She was the same age as he. She also had no father. Her mother, the robust Madame Tranchart, who was a hawker, could boast of being a real widow. This woman was extremely proud of two things: Georgette, her daughter, and the energy and strategy with which she vanquished the policemen in her frequent struggles with them. These daily triumphs had an unfortunate sequel; she always celebrated them in the public house.

Georgette, fresh and dainty, had grown and developed into girlhood, in a sordid environment of misery, drunkenness and humble vice, an inexplicable flower of youth flourishing in spite of all disadvantages.

On seeing her, Quarter Pound lost his usual readiness of speech and stared in dumb amazement at this charming vision of Georgette, in her white communion frock. She looked so charmingly and gracefully childlike, yet with some of the charms of dawning womanhood too. He took a few steps in silence:

"Ah! It is really you?" he gasped at last.

Georgette sighed with satisfaction.

"I thought I should never be up in time for my first communion."

"What is your mother doing?"

"She's sleeping soundly," replied the little girl. "She was a little off the mark last night, but she has promised to come to Mass this morning. The young lady from the Patronage has given her some shoes and a hat, otherwise we should never have seen Mamma at church today. She said to the young lady:

" 'The little one is celebrating her first communion today. I can't say anything against that, since you are providing her frock, but I don't see why I should be humiliated. I'm a poor widow earning my living by the sweat of my brow, but I'm proud for all that. I don't ask for a dress, for I have my green one that is very comfortable, but I'm not going to church with an old crumpled hat, and shapeless shoes in which I've tramped the streets for ages. That couldn't be expected of me, could it?'

"So there!" continued Georgette, "the young lady gave the things. As for me, I've just the best of everything because I'm a good girl, the young lady said."

"And she told the truth," said Quarter Pound, with conviction.

"Here, just look at this veil. You know I hardly know myself how glad I am! If only Mamma will not drink too much today, as she promised, I shall be perfectly happy, I wanted her to get up and come with me, but it was of no use. I do hope she won't take a strong drink this morning to put her in form again after last night. The thought of her behaving badly in church makes me shiver. I've worried about it for the last fortnight."

Quarter Pound knew so well the drunken antics of Madame Tranchart that he smiled to himself while doing his utmost to reassure his little friend.

"Oh, she'll be all right. And after Mass what's going to happen?"

Georgette brightened up: "Oh! that will be wonderful. This evening after vespers Mamma and I are going to Madame Gillot's, you know, the lady who keeps the grocer's

shop at the corner of the street. Her son, Oscar, is also a first communicant, and he so much wants me to be with him after the ceremony," she added with her modest manner.

Quarter Pound's face darkened, but he made no comment.

"But why don't you also take your first communion? You would have had a fine new suit and I should have asked Oscar to have invited you also."

"I don't care anything about such things," said Quarter Pound coldly. "I'm a freethinker. I'm not criticising anybody; everybody has a right to his opinion, but can you imagine me like 'that'?"

"That" was Oscar Gillot, who was now seen strutting towards them, with such an air of confidence in himself as if conscious of the immaculate whiteness of his trousers and the faultlessness of his whole attire.

"He's well dressed," replied the girl, not without a note of annoyance in her sweet young voice.

Quarter Pound shrugged his shoulders, saying: "Oh, well, I'm off."

He hurried away, feeling cold and miserable, with some strange, new pain at his heart. He looked at himself in a shop mirror—his torn trousers, the man's jacket hanging in ribbons, his old faded cap, all were faithfully depicted. He gazed at the reflection of himself as if seeing it for the first time, and the pain at his heart increased. But he continued his retreat bravely, drawing away from Georgette with an air of manly dignity, while she walked away with Oscar towards the Patronage.

She didn't see Quarter Pound again that day, and in the whirl of emotions he was, for the moment, forgotten. At first the ceremony was somewhat spoiled for her by the absence of her mother.

"Will she come?" she inwardly questioned while peeping out from the veil to cast wistful glances towards the door. She was just despairing of her mother's arrival when Madame Tranchart appeared, resplendent in the hat and shoes of the Patronage and the comfortable green dress. She had drunk nothing that morning except three glasses of white wine—a mere nothing for her. In consequence she was so overcome by the music, the incense, and white-

robed children that she sank on her knees in a helpless mass and began to sob behind a huge pocket handkerchief.

Georgette was reassured and all went well. The procession, on leaving the church, was a veritable triumph for her. She felt herself to be the prettiest of all, and with downcast eyes and modest mien she exulted in her success. All the girls' big brothers cast admiring glances in her direction, and one was heard to say:

"I should prefer her in a wedding frock."

He quickly skulked away, however, before the menacing glances of Madame Tranchart and the pokes of her umbrella.

Georgette had a fright during vespers, for her mother fell asleep in her chair and began to talk aloud. Fortunately a neighbour woke her up and during the remainder of the service she sat up straight and solemn, a model of propriety.

The dinner at Madame Gillot's was a very gay affair. At dessert, Mr. Gillot made a speech, eloquently speaking of the duty of children to their parents. He was a good speaker and caused quite a sensation. Madame Tranchart was not strong enough to bear the stress of her emotions unaided. She borrowed strength from the grocer's wine, also from his brandy, both of which she found extremely good.

Georgette sat next to Oscar, who supplied her with champagne with precocious gallantry. At last it was time to go. Madame Tranchart rose with difficulty. She managed to say good-bye to her host and hostess, also to the guests, but there her strength failed her. When she had turned the corner of the street and found herself alone with her daughter, she collapsed against the railing.

"I am going to die," she whispered. "Everything is getting hazy."

In her green dress, her face rendered paler than it really was by the moon's cold light, shaking with spasms, she presented a pitiable appearance. Georgette, a little unsteady after drinking champagne, struggled valiantly with the hooks of her mother's dress, but all to no purpose. The situation became worse, yet she dared not call for help.

"Gracious heavens, she looks as though she had a sunstroke, this poor Madame Tranchart," said a well-known voice.

Georgette turned her head, her heart gave a big bound, a cry of relief escaped her lips, and she sprang towards Quarter Pound.

"It's you; it's you. Were you following us?"

"I didn't think that Oscar would help you home," he said simply. He bent over the green heap on the ground.

"Hello, Madame Tranchart!" he screamed in her ear. "Let's go and have a drink."

She understood.

"Yes, yes," she stammered on trying to get up.

Uniting their efforts, the two children succeeded in getting Madame Tranchart home and onto her bed.

"Too much excitement is not good for Madame Tranchart," said Quarter Pound, breathless with the effort.

However, little Georgette was calm now and no longer frightened.

"We can't say much," she whispered; "she was so nice in church."

And when Quarter Pound was gone, she hurried to change her dress and help her mother to bed.

. . . . . .

Quarter Pound considered himself a man since he had attained his fifteenth year and secured regular work in a bowling green. However, it was with the impatience of a child that he awaited the Sunday on which he was to go to the Gingerbread Fair with his friend Georgette.

When he returned home that Saturday night, however, everything was wrong. His mother had not been paid and he was obliged to part with all his own earnings except thirty sous. Then, as if that were not sufficiently annoying, Georgette told him that Oscar, the heir to the grocery store, would accompany them to the fair—Oscar whom he hated without knowing exactly why.

On Sunday evening Georgette, looking more lovely than ever, appeared with her mother at the metro station. Oscar was waiting for them. No sooner did he see Georgette than he rushed towards her.

"What fun we shall have this evening! I have ten francs that mother gave me and four of my own. We must make haste."

Quarter Pound looked at him angrily. Until the last moment he had hoped against hope that Oscar wouldn't turn up.

"Oh," he said in an undertone to Georgette, "what a fine man he is, this youngster, Oscar. I prefer him in his grocer's apron."

Georgette looked at Oscar who, although he was only fifteen and a half years old, was a head taller than Quarter Pound. He wore a black suit, a hat that was too big, a collar too high and a bright blue tie. He had red, pimply cheeks and the mere suggestion of a beard. He was smoking a cigarette in an imitation amber holder.

Georgette looked at Oscar and then at Quarter Pound. The latter was still small, as if wishing to continue to merit his nickname. He wore his everyday clothes, since he had no others: an old check cap, a faded jersey, and cyclists' knickers.

Georgette, annoyed by the remarks about Oscar, whom she thought very smart, was about to make a mocking reply, when that feeling of sympathy which Quarter Pound generally evoked in her, by virtue of their common poverty, banished less worthy sentiments and she said nothing.

Mother Tranchart paid the metro fare. She was in a good mood, thanks to the three glasses of spirits taken earlier in the evening.

"I must sit down," she declared as soon as they arrived at the fair. "I'll go to the little wine shop at the corner of the street. I know the woman there; you'll come for me at eleven o'clock."

With a gesture towards Quarter Pound and Oscar she said to Georgette: "I give you over to the care of these gentlemen."

"Don't drink too much," cautioned Georgette in an undertone.

"Never fear, little Georgie. Just a glass or two to please my friend at the wine shop."

The three children hurried off.

"Where shall we begin? Where are we going first?" asked Georgette, full of joy and feeling she was going to have a good time.

"Oh, we shall go everywhere!" exclaimed Oscar, remembering the fourteen francs in his pocket.

"Say what you want to do," said Georgette, nudging Quarter Pound.

Quarter Pound put on the air of a disillusioned man of the Old World.

"As for me, these things don't please me any more, I've seen them so often."

Georgette threw him a discontented look. Her friend Quarter Pound was usually gay and a good companion. Why had he become such a grumbler?

"Let's go on the 'Russian mountains,'" he declared, "I adore them."

Oscar paid for the "Russian mountains" and Quarter Pound paid for a trip on a bowl which threw you up and down much as on shipboard. Georgette, delighted with this movement, demanded a second round for which Oscar offered to pay. Suddenly Georgette took a violent fancy to riding on some "merry-go-round" pigs. It was Quarter Pound's turn to pay, but he had only three sous left.

"Let's go," said Georgette.

Oscar, who didn't want to pay out of his turn, looked at Quarter Pound to invite them.

But Quarter Pound shook his head: "I'm not going on. I've had enough of those things. You like that?" he said, turning to Georgette, his eyes pathetically beseeching.

Georgette, however, didn't understand. Without a word she joined Oscar, who was already astride a pig.

Quarter Pound remained below. A terrible distress seized him and he experienced again that inexplicable pain in his heart. He watched his friends pass time and again. Oscar seemed to be guiding Georgette, holding her by the arm and jumping up and down on his own seat.

Georgette's light skirt flew up now and again disclosing a shapely ankle. Quarter Pound felt his heart beating wildly. New torments took possession of him. He grew pale. His mind was filled with rebellion as he asked himself by

what means he could obtain money quickly, without working.

The merry-go-round came to a standstill. Georgette got off and, while Oscar rushed towards a stall to buy some nougat, she rejoined Quarter Pound. He did not look at her and his clouded brow made her regret her selfishness.

"Why didn't you come on the merry-go-round with us?" she asked. Still he said nothing. She blushed a little, then in a lower voice:

"You haven't any more money, eh?" Quarter Pound raised his eyes to her face. She had never seen them so hard.

"Don't you worry about that," he hissed between set teeth. "I shall pay whatever you want, you'll see. . . . I'll have some money. . . . I'm worth as much as anybody else. . . . I shall be able to arrange things . . . don't be afraid."

"Don't talk such nonsense." Georgette's voice trembled a little. She approached him.

"I say, I have five francs. . . . You can give them back to me on your next pay day."

Quarter Pound thrilled with pleasure and his face betrayed the tenderness he felt for her.

"Get away with you," he said softly, pushing away the proffered hand and the five francs. "It isn't worth while. . . . It's true the round-abouts don't interest me."

He hesitated, and making a supreme effort:

"But go again with him, since you like that."

Georgette didn't reply. Oscar was coming with his nougat.

"Are we going again?" he cried. "Are you coming Georgette?"

Georgette shook her head.

She thought a moment, then said somewhat scornfully: "Oh, I've had enough. You find that interesting?" she said, turning with a frank gaze into Quarter Pound's eyes.

She took his hand, and leaving the stupefied Oscar, ran away with Quarter Pound towards the wine shop where they had left Madame Tranchart.

. . . . .

Quarter Pound was standing with a cigarette in his mouth, in front of the Orsay Station, gazing idly across at the slightly heaving water of the Seine. His reverie was interrupted by a clear young voice. It was Georgette.

"It's you, Quarter Pound! What are you doing here?"

Quarter Pound turned round quickly, his face lighting up with the keen joy he felt at the sight of his friend.

He said nothing for a minute. He just gazed at her. Straight and tall, with her woollen dress a little the worse for wear but still becoming, she seemed already a woman, yet still a child.

"How lovely you are!" murmured Quarter Pound at the end of a minute's silence.

Georgette burst into gay laughter.

"Really, I thought you had lost your tongue," she said. "But I asked you what you were doing here?"

"I am waiting for my Englishman who is returning from Bordeaux," he said with much importance.

Georgette knew perfectly well what he meant, but to tease him she opened her eyes wide in feigned astonishment.

"For whom are you waiting?"

"Monsieur Harris. You know all about it. I worked for him last year; surely you haven't forgotten."

"Really and truly I don't remember a single thing," said Georgette, quivering with the mischievous intentions, well hidden by her assumed appearance of candid sincerity.

"Oh yes you do. I met him one night last winter near the St. Lazare Station. He didn't know which way to turn and was surrounded with luggage, the porter having abandoned him. Then I strolled up, helped him to carry his things and got a taxi for him. That set us chatting a little. He said I was smart, and told me to come and see him next morning, which I did and thus found a job where I earned a little money."

"Oh," said Georgette, "I remember now, you were there for two or three months."

"We agreed very well, Mr. Harris and I. He's such a fine chap and speaks French like a Frenchman. He works for some great newspapers. He's also a partner in a great

factory. He wrote to ask me to meet him. That suited me very well as my work on the bowling green is finished. I say! Georgette, how about my getting a place in this factory, wouldn't that be fine?"

"Ah, yes, that wouldn't be bad if only you could get in," said Georgette sceptically. "But I must be getting away," she added, "it's time I went to my shorthand."

"How are you getting on with it?"

"Soon I shall pass an examination for speed. You understand how much better it will be for me to be a shorthand typist than to be apprenticed to a milliner. What luck that Mamma understood that!"

They parted, Georgette to continue the way she was going and Quarter Pound to enter the station.

That evening, before going in to see his mother and sister, he rushed into his neighbours' lodging.

"Good evening," he cried in an excited voice. "I've such news for you, something wonderful."

"What? Whatever can it be?" said Georgette, full of impatient curiosity.

"It all happened thanks to my good Englishman, Mr. Harris. Imagine Georgette, he wants a shorthand typist. I've told him about you and I'm to take you to him tomorrow morning, when you'll just see for yourself what a wonderful fellow he is."

One of the most glorious days of Quarter Pound's life was that when Georgette was formally engaged by Mr. Harris. Back home in the Tranchart lodging he was thanked effusively by Madame Tranchart and her daughter.

His satisfaction remained at the same height of exuberant exultation for two weeks, for Georgette filled her new post with credit and to the entire satisfaction of her new employer. At the end of this time, however, a cloud appeared on the horizon and Quarter Pound began to experience disagreeable and troubling sensations of anxiety. He didn't know what was the matter. He only felt that some hard destiny hung around him, ready to swoop down upon him and imprison him in a relentless grasp. Then, one evening, while walking along the avenues, under the calm of the blue sky of June, he realised the cause of his gloomy thoughts.

Up to this time he had regarded Mr. Harris as a person without age or sex, just as a benevolent individual who had fallen on to his path in some miraculous manner.

Georgette was no longer a child. With a tremendous rapidity she was fast changing into a beautiful and gracious woman, full of the joy which the consciousness of her youth and beauty gave her. Moreover she was much more preoccupied with the man who employed her than with the boy who had found her the position. As Quarter Pound turned over these things in his mind, he became discontented. He changed visibly, becoming taciturn, morose, irritable and incomprehensible. He was always full of doubts and worries, and always on the lookout for a sure proof of his suspicions.

One evening they changed from surmise to certitude. Mr. Harris had just told him that he would place him in the factory at the end of the month. What surer proof could he desire? It was to get rid of him and leave the field clear for himself. After this he kept religiously out of the way of Mr. Harris, spending his days wandering about the streets of Paris, with no aim and no interest in anything.

On this particular evening he reached Montsouris before Georgette was home from her work, and went to call on Madame Tranchart, who received him with her customary affability.

"Good evening, Quarter Pound, what's the matter with you? You don't look yourself. Georgette's not home yet. What do you think? Mr. Harris called here a little while ago. What a nice man he is! He chatted with me and your mother. . . . We weren't expecting him, but as he told us he just stepped in to make our acquaintance." Quarter Pound went white to his lips on hearing this revelation of Madame Tranchart. He silently slipped away home where he found his mother serving the soup.

His conviction was correct. There could no longer be any doubt whatever. He had read novels, he had been to the cinema. He saw the whole thing as plain as a spike-staff. There were always men to take advantage of young girls' innocence, and plenty of young attractive girls to be kidnapped by bold princes . . . with their consent. In this

case Mr. Harris represented the prince. What would happen? Had he come to ask Madame Tranchart for her daughter's hand in marriage or to reconnoitre the ground for the elopement?

Quarter Pound's heart throbbed and felt ready to burst as in imagination he saw the whole scene. The dark night, the prince, the motor car and Georgette, a willing victim carried away by her lover. Then the sea, the boat, and across those tragic waves she is swiftly taken away, away, where he can find her no more.

Quarter Pound trembled and his teeth chattered. Perhaps even now she had already gone. But no, that was her footstep he heard, she had come home once more.

The next morning Quarter Pound made a bold resolution. He went to see Mr. Harris.

"Ah, here you are," said the Englishman, on seeing him, "that's well, I'm just wanting you."

But Quarter Pound, hearing nothing, rushed forward with outstretched hands, pleading wildly:

"Don't take her away, oh don't, please, don't, we have only her, her mother and I. What would we do without her? Don't pretend not to understand. I've seen too much while tumbling about the streets, not to see your game. Georgette mustn't take that road. Don't take her away."

Mr. Harris started. Little by little light dawned on him. He repressed a laugh on seeing Quarter Pound's tragic face and appealing gestures.

"Monsieur Quarter Pound," he said with much gravity, "I wish to tell you of my approaching marriage with Miss Florence Stanley, to whom I have been engaged for two years. Tomorrow I go to England for the wedding."

He smiled and added:

"I forgive you for your folly, and won't let it make any difference to my promise to give you a situation in my factory."

Quarter Pound had turned first red and then pale.

"Don't bear me a grudge," he stammered, "I can't imagine what happened to me. I must have gone mad. It's because Georgette . . . you understand . . . Georgette."

With a supreme effort he recovered his sang-froid.

"You understand, Mr. Harris. I didn't mean what I said, it was only a joke."

At this moment Georgette herself entered. Seeing her fresh beauty Harris couldn't repress a pitying murmur, as he looked from her to Quarter Pound.

"My poor boy," he said.

But Quarter Pound had quite forgotten Mr. Harris, he was speaking to Georgette.

MONSIEUR MAURICE

By COLETTE

(From *Le Matin*)

A CHILDISH contentment and schoolboy gaiety came over Maurice Houssiaux. He had not felt thus a week before when the chairman of the board of directors had questioned him as to his knowledge of agriculture. His influence as guardian of the chateau had won him the situation as Director of the Motor Department. The big office of the director delighted him with its old wainscoting and Aubusson tapestry. A window box filled with greens softened the curves of the high windows and a marble bust of a man with a wig reflected its rounded back in the mirror. The deference of the head clerk of the office gave the final touch of importance to his position.

"Is that all, Wattier?"

"Yes, for today, my dear sir, you are free."

"You will go with me?"

"No, thanks, I shall prepare your work for tomorrow and yes, I forgot, here is that confounded letter about the grain; and your speech for the hotel representatives. Had you thought of that?"

"Yes, but. . . ."

"I had also thought of it. You must make a good beginning there. Don't worry, I have all night to prepare it. It is better that you do not clap or applaud at once. You must not get used up this first month, and also there are those two people from your home who have been waiting for two hours. . . ."

"What people?"

"The stenographers. Do you want me to send one away without more ado? You have but one position vacant."

"You have their names?"

"Here they are, Miss Valentin and Miss Lajarisse, both from Gransac."

"Lajarisse, Lajarisse, there are about three hundred by that name in my town and at least sixty right in my district. Which one is it?"

"Shall I send them away or tell them to come in?"

Wattier was excited about his new job with Houssiaux and danced first on one foot and then the other, like a barber or an acrobat. Houssiaux repeated the name of the person with the southern name and looked wistfully out into the garden. His cheeks flushed and his little rounded stomach, restrained by a belt, stuck out in front of him like a cushion.

"I shall go to see them," he decided. "You say they are from Gransac where I won the election. There is no one else waiting?"

"No, all gone."

"I will see them as I go out. Here they would only gossip about Gransac for a half hour or more. One after the other, that's how we'll work it. I do not care to offend them."

Wattier broke into a little cruel laugh and Houssiaux, with his coat on and hat in hand, went into the adjoining bare office, very businesslike in appearance, in bad order, with bare walls and common furniture, which did not depress him however.

"My dear lady, you are from Gransac? Please have a chair."

"Oh, Director."

She was a big awkward girl who regarded him as might a slave, but a slave who knew her price. Notwithstanding her outward show of timidity, she was really beautiful, with a little saucy nose.

"Oh, these girls from home, what queens they all are," Mr. Maurice Houssiaux thought to himself as he asked Miss Valentin some polite questions of little importance.

"Yes, Director, yes certainly, I commenced work with Vanavan on Grand Street at the corner, you know where it is, don't you? I am a good stenographer, it was my father who put up the big sign across the street when you were running for office a couple of years ago, you remember? The Director remembers, doesn't he?"

She spoke in the third person as would an ordinary serv-

ant, looking at the floor with the air of a small, timid child.

She is evidently making the most of it acting a part, but then she's right, no doubt, thought the Director. She takes it all as a matter of course, she is from Gransac. What an ornament in my office.

"One of my secretaries will let you know, my dear young lady," he said.

She opened wide her eyes which were narrow and blood red in the corners:

"Will the Director give me some hope of success?"

"Yes, indeed."

He shook hands with her and amusedly watched her in her confusion knock over a chair and bump into the door on her way out. He turned and regarded himself, big and gray, in the mirror and seemed more distressed than ever.

"One cannot have everything, one arrives at an age when. . . . Well, well, and the other, Miss Lajarisse, supposing I have Wattier tell her to go."

But just then a shadow appeared in the doorway and Miss Lajarisse, a woman of fifty, bent and out of date, with cotton gloves and a hat covered with black currants, stood silent before him.

"You come from Gransac, Madame? That is surely a recommendation, I love the folks from my home town."

"I have been in business in Paris for seventeen years, employed as a stenographer and general secretary and clerk in libraries."

"Very well; let us see, no, never mind the papers, you may give them to one of my secretaries if necessary. From which family of Lajarisse are you—you are from the bridge?"

"No, we live on the hillside, near the road to Casteix."

"Oh yes, I know."

The Director smiled, closing his eyes slightly. The hill going up to Casteix, he used to come down this road on horseback, where every kind of nondescript and questionable character greeted him as he passed.

"I know where you mean, it is far. . . ."

"No, not so far, Mr. Director. . . ."

Miss Lajarisse looked him up and down, white haired and age worn.

"It was your favorite route, Mr. Director, every one down there knew that."

"Yes, I remember. . . ."

He remembered himself as a young man, a gay Beau Brummel with the ladies, who loved to joke and flatter him. He could almost hear the click of the flint beneath his horse's hoofs. He raised his head in a half sincere expression.

"Yes, Miss Lajarisse, I wish I might live again the time when I used to go down that road on my horse. . . ."

"Your horse Gamin, Mr. Director. . . ."

He became as happy as a child.

"Yes, that was mine."

"And often on hot summer days you were in shirt sleeves and they were rolled up. . . ."

"Yes, I remember. . . ."

"You used to hold your horse's reins with one hand and make a big sweep with your hat to the ladies you passed . . . and even to those of a rather shady character . . . to Carmen on the balcony . . . to the little girl in the tobacco store . . . in fact to all. . . ."

Houssiaux took her hands, encased in the cotton gloves, in his.

"Yes yes, you remember all that."

"Yes, very well, Mr. Maurice."

The old woman did not turn her head nor hide the tears which came to her eyes, in whose blue depths was still the picture of Mr. Maurice and his horse. Houssiaux gave a deep sigh of regret and released her hand as she stepped back.

"By the way, Mr. Director, you think you still have a place open?" she enquired plaintively.

He passed his hand through his hair as he used to do before it was grey.

"Yes, there is one for you, Miss Lajarisse. Have you a minute? Take this pad . . . the pencils are over there. Are you ready? Take this: 'My dear old comrade, you have kindly called my attention to . . .' "

THE EMPTY BAG

By P. DRIEU LA ROCHELLE

(From *La Nouvelle Revue Française*)

I met him for the first time at Gertrude's. She was not married at that time, and she used to receive us in a suite of her own in her father's house.

He was what people call a handsome fellow. A mixture of several commonplace types. A streak of the pedant in me always made me seek for some Italian strain in his ancestry to account for his southern appearance; it was even more than that—there was an underlying suggestion of the Rumanian about him. Yet Spaniards, too, have that masculine gloss. Above all else, a young Parisian, clean, as is their wont, with an English cleanliness.

Tall and broad, with flesh and hair in plenty, brown head and tanned skin, he had compelling eyes, clear and grey. The swing of his walk suggested a youth of ancient Greece destined to overfatness through stupor. That was a sure inheritance from his father, the factotum of some Catholic stockbroker, who waddled guilelessly to his office every morning. However, he was pure French: his exotic Christian name, Gonzague, was but the fruit of a mother's ignorant fancy.

He had the sort of tailor who likes to give his customers the illusion that they are men of means. Later on he grew to like the fresh colour schemes of English ties and socks. Gertrude introduced him to me with some emphasis. She drew me into a corner of her absurd studio to sing me a song about his sensitiveness, the books he read and the people with whom he consorted.

My first impression was one of thickness. I set to work to discover for myself the charms Gertrude so insist-

ently claimed for this talkative fellow. Under my treatment, his outline altered somewhat.

Wit he had none, but, since no one has any nowadays, I keep forgetting that one ought to possess it. With unruffled impertinence he chatted about all manner of people whose names were as unknown to me as apparently to most others. Instead of resenting this, I caught myself being rather fascinated by this very quality of the unknown. People listened open mouthed to his garrulity.

From discussing these unfamiliar persons to whom he linked himself by slight, futile bonds, he would, brusquely, at odd moments, switch back to discussing himself, but he did so mechanically and apparently with no deep interest.

The syncopated rhythm of his talk induced a reaction of irresponsibility, and my lips curled into a smile. He stopped dead and seemed to be probing anxiously, not my heart, but rather the depths of my mind. I suppose he ended by placing me in some haphazard category, but I felt that, after the fashion of a third-rate actor, he was grateful for my attention.

Gertrude was delighted with the interest I showed, and showered cakes and cigarettes on me. She promised to loan me her first editions and evoked vague dreams of telephonic joys. She added that she did not believe in discouraging her sensuousness. The statement was hardly necessary, for we were surrounded with material proofs of it: her rooms were morbidly sumptuous, her tea had a heavy, nauseating aroma, a lady pianist imported from some far corner of Europe was diffusing music, and her friends were toiling in sluggish fashion to give evidence of licentious wit.

I went out with Gonzague. We walked into a saloon, where we ate and drank, then into a circus and one or two more bars; we left each other about two a.m., both of us rather drunk, during all which time we bombarded each other with questions to which neither ever replied. But by our hurried, simultaneous queries each gave the other an insight, clearer perhaps than a blunt confession, into his desires, his weaknesses and the secret places of his heart.

Rather crudely we unveiled our petty vices, but each

sought especially to push the enquiry, to bend the other to his line of thought, to astonish him by the well ordered method of his cross-examination.

Of it all there remained the acrid taste of tobacco in our mouths and the smell of it in our clothes. For one night we had run the gamut of a young man's inquisitiveness. Towards the end he confessed that he was ailing and that this reacted on his mental habits. He felt himself isolated, abnormal, soiled, ridiculous, deprived of the fullness of his rights. With the lapse of time this disability threatened disaster. Viewed from afar, his fate appeared wrapped in ominous gloom. For the last six months he had been cut off from the world.

"You miss—women?"

"No, I don't know what I miss. I miss everything. The evil spreads itself in so many directions. I cannot drink—at least, I ought not to drink. I never ring up my friends, who would carry me off of a night as you did today. I have got into the way of shunning women; I am afraid of being drawn too far, so I behave like a boor to new acquaintances and fall back on old comrades, on young girls. The bright resolutions I made in the war years to quaff life to the full have become useless. Confounded luck! Ah, if I was only well again! But . . . will that day ever come?"

We had agreed to meet the next day, but a round of pleasure I was drawn into prevented me, and it was a long time before we met again.

One night I happened into a saloon near the Exchange. I had never been there before. At first I only saw some indifferent individuals there, then, suddenly, I noticed Gonzague in a group of young men. They had all turned to have a look at the newcomer and Gonzague recognised me. Our eyes met. He started an inviting gesture, but I let my eyes fall, brusquely, as if blinded by the glare.

I sat down; near them, and alone, I could not but overhear them. They were talking loud, laying stress rather on other men's ignorance than on their own knowledge. Evidently a group of literary gentlemen. Gonzague stood out from his companions; here too, he was the centre of

attraction. Not that he spoke much—for the others were orating at great length—but people would turn to him whenever he dropped a sentence, half in fun, snappy, brief, unpolished.

They were taking him all in. On the whole they were poorly clad, with simple dignity and few childish touches. He was dressed with the showy stylishness of the kind of man who, living not in a defined set that knows him, but in public places, balls, restaurants and hotel lounges, must needs attract the attention of the crowd.

These young idealists soon tired of the sight. They were smoking and drinking hard, unnaturally so.

Gonzague turned towards me and we felt obliged to shake hands. But I was pleasantly steeped in torpid thought and I did not pick up his machinelike questions. He did not press me unduly. I have the gift, given me probably in compensation for the lack of many others, of rendering myself indifferent. Yet he found time to slip in the name of a literary review to which his friends contributed. He did so with a wealth of ludicrous precautions, as if it might provoke the admiration and interest of the bartender and the customers.

"What you doing with yourself?" I mumbled.

"Nothing," he replied, in a curious tone, a mixture of arrogance, satisfaction and doubt.

The youths were still talking—about unknown ones, praising or denouncing them with equal zest. Praise seemed chiefly earned by trifles. One was commended for collecting matchboxes from all parts of the world. "Yes, but Gonzague beats that!" some one exclaimed. Gonzague laughed with sheer pleasure, begged that his perfection be excused, and promptly started capping other people's tales of his exploit.

During a whole week, he had experienced an irresistible impulse to seize saloon accessories. Shakers, ash trays, saucers, pokers disappeared into his pockets. He had had another phase during which he coveted uniform and livery buttons. With a special pair of scissors he would cut them off in the underground, at the entrance to barracks, while talking to hotel porters and boys, without the victims ever

guessing the game. Then he transferred his attentions to initialed handkerchiefs, to fountain pens, to monocles, to ladies' paintsticks. The thinner the prank, the more it was savoured.

From the praise of kleptomania the conversation wandered to the glorification of drink, of card and race-course gambling. To their various fancies they all attached the same sort of reasons. Others were seeking to coin oversubtle phrases that just touched on these playthings of theirs and on which the mind could conveniently glide away elsewhere. Gonzague merely gave them a mild benediction. Under his trifling tone I felt that he was absorbed by the love of the game in which the player risks everything, where for an infinitesimal chance heavy interest is charged. No single form of the game had a special attraction for him; cards or horses had no more fascination for him in themselves than cocktails or the puny risks of petty thieving. What really attracted him was not even speculating on chances, or enjoying looming fears. He seemed simply to have found in it all the supreme kill-time, the emptiest gesture with which to greet the passing hours.

At our next meeting on the morrow—for he had run after me to invite me to lunch—I understood even better how entirely he was absorbed by this yearning to waste time, to imitate and hasten its course by any kind of idle pretense.

The truth was, Gonzague was empty, and he sought deliberately to create emptiness within himself. He was, to begin with, totally ignorant. Knowing nothing of the past, he let the present slip away from him too. He read no books, looked at no pictures, listened to no music. That was fatal, for art, in giving salt to sensations, alone enables men to realise life. That is a debt even the worst of uncandid brutes must owe. Gonzague imagined he possessed all that because he shook hands, in drawing rooms and lobbies, with a few brilliant ghosts of that world, and had the privilege of calling them by their names. Devoid of the spirit of intrigue, he yet knew his way about, and an easy manner made him ready prey to all. I had no idea of the slipshod ways of Paris, so I wondered how it was that

two or three literary salons were open to him. He was not only made welcome there, but, without ever asking for the simplest credential—in view of his youth, a single page of his writing would have sufficed—people said he had a great future.

He was only twenty-two, but he knew less than a child of ten. I could have wished him to meet some candid pedantic soul who would dare to affront him in public and compel him to open that empty bag out of which he fondly hoped, later on, to improvise his magic tricks.

In the meantime he was not without occupation. Following a time honoured custom, quaint survival, he had started his career by a shadowy course of legal studies. But he never actually set foot in the School of Law, these gaunt new barracks built on the ruins of the Latin Quarter and to this day visited by American and Japanese students. He had jumped straight into the job of secretary to an illustrious journalist. Having squeezed himself through this narrow door, he probably imagined himself to have become a man of letters.

Every morning his employer dictated to him a paragraph for a society journal, a leader on foreign policy for a provincial paper and a sketch of Parisian life for an American agency. Gonzague mastered a typewriter more or less efficiently, but had since the age of ten given no further thought to spelling. The journalist, being a man of the schools, found this little to his taste and said so with a schoolmasterly air. Gonzague retorted that he did not care a damn for spelling, but that he did care a good deal for reproaches, especially when they were justified, further that if he ignored grammar, the old man ignored his manners, since he even dragged his secretary into the bathroom to dictate his articles while performing his ablutions. "And, anyway," he finished up, "you had better pay up what you owe me."

Still, the memory of this reprimand rankled, but he had no time to learn, not even elemental things. He promptly became the assistant of an energetic individual whose hobby-horses were the Stock Exchange, the Press and Politics. From morning till night it was a case of perpetual

action, not a minute to spare; indeed Gonzague could safely afford to lose them all now. The day was not long enough, and he was delighted when his evenings were not free. I have seen him at seven o'clock in the evening, deserted by his friends, half mad with fear of his own company, hook himself on to the telephone and implore anybody to come and join him. Had he had any enemies, he would have cheerfully become reconciled to the biggest of them if he could by this means have secured company for one evening. Left alone, he had to think, to feel; and these were unusual exercises that, he well knew, could not fail to entail pain.

His conversation partook of the maniacal character of that of a hermit. He simply and rudely ignored his companion, who, be it said, nine times out of ten, was equally indisposed for human converse.

These manias of Gonzague's were in their origin feeble impulses that had acquired strength from lack of opposition. For the victims of these whims he had no respect, since they were but his fellow men. It is of the essence of a collector that he must daily fumble with his collection; so, with whomsoever he might be talking, Gonzague would make play, pushing and bustling him, to get him where he wanted, when, once more, he would pass in review all the people of his acquaintance. He noted the little daily changes in their dress, their friendships, their bluff, and made a kind of nightmare feast out of all this material. In order to avoid having to confess that this had grown into a habit, he had invented a profound reason for it: an affected ambition of which he made sardonic boast and which caused him, he averred, to consider every man in the light of a potential rival, to be caught by surprise.

In reality no one derived more secret comfort than Gonzague from the prospect of being overwhelmed by the cabal which every man fondly feels to be conspiring against him. His only bonds with others were these thin threads of gossip, so, to deceive himself and prevent a feeling of total isolation, he was perpetually increasing the number of his casual relationships. But in his life there was neither friendship nor love.

A friend who had seen me in Gonzague's company, asked me:

"Do you see much of that fellow? What pleasure can you find in being with him? He is not funny. And, as for his morals . . . they say . . ."

This warning friend did not move in the same set as Gonzague, far from it. He was ironically but inflexibly careful never to venture outside the set where birth had placed him. His idols, his totems, his shrines were not those of Gonzague. Yet one finds in different circles, however wide apart, men of similar type, obvious contemporaries. For instance, my friend had said: "He is not funny," and, so saying, was applying a favourite test of his generation.

Is he funny or not? . . . the only people who escape this question are men firmly entrenched behind a snobbery of some kind, it may be money, or name, or profession, or even vice. Generally speaking, one admits into the category of funny people, an indulgent friend, a titled relation, an artist or a neurotic.

What makes a man "funny"? Not so much his actions or his speech, but rather his attitude towards life, a way he has of setting out the facts that invites his friends to let themselves glide comfortably down the easiest of inclined planes. The great art is to refuse no sensation to one's contemporaries, who, having lost the recipe for the old amusements and having invented singularly few new ones, become all the more eager and seek in every moment a fresh delight. They look for variety, they love change for its own sake rather than for the sake of the things that change, and they measure an emotion by its rapidity oftener than by its intensity. If, in addition, the indulgent friend can furbish up anew yesterday's yarn, or mimic two or three people (for imitations are always more popular than portraits that demand an effort of the imagination to be understood), or embroil an entire situation by an epigram in tune with fashionable wit, he will acquire the reputation of being truly funny. These are trifling gifts, but they are rare, and they put their possessors on an envied pedestal.

Being a normal person, I allowed myself to be moved by my friend's remark. I said to myself that, after all, Gonzague was neither very witty nor very funny. But pride came to the rescue; I wanted to justify my cultivation of the man, and that determined the issue in his favor. He could pass well enough in a crowd. I did not ask very much of him. We spoke of ties, of the next boxing match, or of the future of our acquaintances. Would So-and-so get in the Academy? Very likely. Would Blank get that vacant Under Secretaryship? . . . Why not? Dash was on the point of giving us all a start and would climb into the Board of Directors of forty big companies by means of a matrimonial step-ladder . . . yes, Miss So-and-so. In short, we gossiped. Gonzague loved this little game; if his processes of observation were somewhat primitive, that was through wilful shallowness of thought. He pretended to be an expert in unmasking affectations of indolence, haste, clumsiness and capability. But, since he had no sense of tragedy, he was deaf to those minute inflexions of the voice that betray real emotion however well cast be the mask.

For some time now I had experienced some curiosity regarding Gonzague's private life. Like most men of my generation, I have an insatiable desire to learn the details of other people's morals. This is a mania easily accounted for. Love remains the great business of life. It keeps us busy with rendezvous, telephone calls, comings and goings and all manner of kindred exercises; moreover, it fills our otherwise empty minds. That is the same today, and yesterday, and at all times; the same in Paris or anywhere else.

What specially interests us is the degree of energy, physical and sentimental, that people expend on this side of their life. Of course we want to know about persons and events, but the cardinal question is just this: How do all these people behave towards each other in their privacy? What exactly do they each contribute of their "ego"? We clothe this curiosity in a mantle of irony out of hypocrisy: at bottom it is a prurient instinct. Since these researches have precedence over all others, it is of vast importance

to excel in them. Hence a perpetual valuation of oneself and of others, a complicated game of comparisons. Love is a tired thing. That is why this watch over our neighbours' love affairs takes the shape of an anxious, tricky, perfidious espionage. One is waiting for the fall, expecting weakness, looking for failings. So to meet perfectly normal love induces astonishment; it seems queer, perhaps a pretence, or a mere passing episode. Inquisitiveness of this sort works on what materials it can get, but it guesses too, and invents. Three or four legends have grown up, and by these tokens we categorise individuals, couples and groups. The number of legends is restricted by the fact that the rites of the flesh are incapable of infinite variation.

Gonzague and I spoke constantly of these things, with the deceiving cynicism usual in such conversations in France: deceiving because, despite all, the facts remain secret. It is not a question of wilful reserve, but of the impossibility of one soul fully penetrating the other. You may freely confess your actions, but you cannot unveil all the impulses of which they are born. At the root of most things is a lie, and, since complete self-understanding is impossible, it is not astonishing that to others the inmost shrine of a woman of the streets remains as closed a book as if she were clad in an armour of primness.

Gonzague complained that he had no love adventures. He sometimes sketched out incipient flirts that ran out in twenty-four hours, or he would deplore that for weeks he had had no new experience. Was it the fault of the women, who were not pretty or not clever enough? Or was it his own fault? Did he lack intention, or perseverance? His attempted explanations were verbose and obscure. From incidents I had myself witnessed, I deduced that he always broke off the game before one could even guess whether he stood a chance of success. The reasons he ascribed were various: indolence, the result of his physical ailment, innate timidity and the like. But these were not convincing excuses and one felt he did not take them seriously. His mind seemed possessed by a habit of lamentation, and rather dull lamentation at that, hardly relieved by irony;

he let himself go to his sensation of solitude. Yet, in our anti-romantic age, even our most languorous mists are cut at times by flashes of lightning and vague rumblings that ape thunder. Gonzague would firmly announce that all this must end. Or he would let slip little gurglings of content that led me to think his life might not be as empty of sensation as it appeared. He would take out a pack of cards of a sudden, try a Patience, and serenely assure me that within a fortnight he would be entangled with a brunette as brilliant as she was passionate.

A few days later he would ring me up at two, or it might be eight in the morning, to tell me that the cards had truly foretold.

"What is it? I'm sleepy."

"My dear fellow, last night at some friends' house, I met an amazing woman . . . splendid, just my style."

"Your style?"

"Yes . . . you know: a flat woman, with no breasts or other ridiculous deformations."

"Ah, well, so much the better. Good night."

"Hallo! Are you there? But really, a remarkable woman; unusual face, like one of these Mexican masks—you know —what do they call them?"

". . . ."

"Well, never mind. And she has an interesting wit."

"All right. We'll see. Good-bye till tonight."

"Oh, but I'm not going to show her off . . . besides she is not easy to manage . . . just think: she lives on . . . ah, I was forgetting to tell you . . . she is What's-his-name's cousin . . . what *is* that man's name?"

I was sleeping.

That evening, Gonzague appeared, very neat and well groomed, with an intolerable air of self-satisfaction.

"Ah, I see you have just come from her."

"My dear fellow . . . what are you thinking about? You surely don't think . . . I rang her up. But she cannot see me till Wednesday."

"And then, where will you take her?"

"To a very boring concert."

"And afterwards?"

"Afterwards? nothing. She is very particular . . . and very attractive."

"You're in love."

"Oh . . . in love!"

"Ah . . . then you're not in earnest?"

"I should just think I am. I have been in a state all day. It was an awful business to telephone to her."

The whole of the next day he hung on that telephone. But either the number was engaged or her ladyship was out. I would start a conversation, or a pal would turn up. Always something to prevent him returning to the 'phone and trying his luck again. Gonzague persisted in dragging in his new idol every second, but after a while he proposed a game of poker. When the great day arrived, he had exhausted all his enthusiasm in talking about it. At last he could see her; but he was quite calm and spiritless. He could find nothing to say to her. He had to content himself with repeating previous inventions, very coldly. Of course the woman came to the conclusion that he had had no desire to meet her again. Gonzague might be a very handsome man, but that was hardly enough if he had no fancy for love. There is nothing a woman hates like uncertainty; it breaks her spirit.

Gonzague had a peculiar trick of lacking all emphasis in his speech, of giving each word an equal value, an appearance of having floated down from some far off inaccessible world of sleepy, immovable indolence. This speedily convinced his partner that he would be neither tender nor naughty, but acid, inconstant; that he would always leave till tomorrow what he might do today . . . that is to say, find some direct speech, even if candidly false, which would at least show that he appreciated realities and was a practised hand at caresses.

Gonzague was too wide awake to his own, if not to other people's ways, not to feel from time to time that he was spoiling his chances. This induced a short phase of activity, abounding in blunders however. This fellow, whose lovemaking was as a rule so innocuous and reserved, found means to get his face slapped by a lady whom her habitual partner had that day annoyed into a state of nerves, and

who rather unjustly took offense at a distant allusion Gonzague made to a possible relation which might come to pass between them in some far off hypothetical future.

These are the kind of anecdotes one would have relished fifty years ago, if told about a hobbledehoy student; they sickened me, so I left him severely alone for a week. During these periods of rest I came to distrust all I had ever learned about this insignificant person, to believe only that about him which I did not know and to have a consuming desire to explain to myself in any kind of positive way these feeble confessions of his.

I imagined first of all a mistress whom it was advisable to conceal—through discretion, or fear, or shame. I was promptly rescued from this supposition by the reflection that no man would push discretion to such a degree of silliness. Next I studied more commonplace possibilities. Perhaps Gonzague was, morally or physically, so constituted as to be incapable of ordinary love reactions. In that case he was playing a game with me. This annoyed me and spurred on my processes of thought. Gonzague seemed strong enough and such a weakness seemed unlikely. He had some extraordinary acquaintances. One evening I was waiting for him to finish dressing. A letter was lying on his table . . . left there out of affectation, I imagine. It was impossible not to read the first page:

My dear friend,

Where are you? What are you doing? I could not join you when last I was in Paris. How swift is your life, how burning; almost did I feel a sensation of this heat when I touched your door this morning. Your soul had left a burning trace on the doorstep in flitting out. How I should like to follow you! But, alas, I should soon become exhausted; I should lie down by the roadside and die there, unless your strong hand were to help me up. Ah, if I could only lean on that strong arm of yours . . . but where are you?

What did this sort of thing mean? The handwriting was as effeminate as the tone of the letter, yet there was some evidence that it had been written by a man. I could

see Gonzague's face in the looking glass as he tied his bow. There was in his expression a feeling of the foolishness of this thing; yet I was sure he enjoyed such flatteries. In the set he frequented he probably received many such.

Perhaps this explained the riddle; perhaps unconsciously, this kind of adulation was a compensation to him for his lack of success with women. At the heart of love there is a lust for conquest and flattery: perhaps he satisfied it in this vicarious way, and this made it possible for him to wait for the real thing.

I also occasionally tapped Gonzague's friends for information; it was evident that they, too, had given the subject some thought. At least Gertrude imagined she had.

"Ah, my dear man, yes, is it not queer? People are so strange sometimes. Of course he is a very handsome boy. It is funny, but most of my girl friends have no fancy for him. I must say I myself can conceive of limits I would not care to overstep with him. Yet he *is* a handsome boy. And, if he but tried, they might alter their minds . . . well, one never knows, does one? I don't understand Gonzague; he is so complicated. I think there must be something else."

II

"What? That's just the question. For one thing I think he smokes . . . yes. Did you not know? I happen to know that during the war he was madly in love with a woman. But that does not signify that he does not love opium or anything else better, does it? I am curious to see what will become of him. Don't you think he is quite clever? Have you read what he wrote in 'Minor Poets'? Well, you must give in that it is rather surprising . . . such fine imagery. Well, perhaps there is not much in it, but the tone . . . Well, anyway, he's a queer stick. One really does not know what to make of him."

Here was I launched on a new trail. How was it I had not thought of drugs earlier? That would explain that indifference, these aberrations, these mischievous whims.

I rang him up, went to him, examined him.

No means of telling from that full face. Even the eyes, sure index of passions from the age of twenty, gave no definite reading.

"You look like a man who has been smoking dope all night."

"Good Lord! I, smoke that stuff? Yes, during the war, I did it once or twice, but now . . . How did you guess? Can you really tell? Well, yes, I did smoke last night. It happens to me only once in a blue moon, and I take no particular pleasure in it. But, I must spend the night somehow . . . you see I am not married, so I cannot give myself the luxury of occasional infidelities."

"You're pulling my leg. You know perfectly well you have only to lift your little finger to have half a dozen girls running after you. Come, tell me . . . what is it you really love?"

"My dear fellow, you are like a kid. You think it is awfully clever to imagine the worst. I am every bit as normally constituted as you. I love pretty women . . . but, you see, I am not in perfect health."

I must say just about that time Gonzague was at the zenith of his powers. He might well imagine that no one could catch him. This Gonzague was like a billiard ball, perfectly round, perfectly polished, lying on a beautiful flat billiard table, admirably adapted for any kind of cannon.

At eight o'clock every morning he jumped out of bed into his bath and out of his bath into a suit. He had as many suits as his income allowed, never wore the same one twice running and devoted the most meticulous care to the details of his toilette. Then he jumped into a taxicab and his daily round commenced. First to the Energetic Individual's.

With comprehensive glance he swept the newspapers. Agency cables reduce the pageantry of nations to a fleshless skeleton. Being beautifully ignorant of current history, Gonzague could make fine play with battles, congresses and speeches. The press is a paper plant of which printers' ink is the sap; it merely brushes in passing the real life of men, shallow though it be. He who would, through

the jungle of heads and crossheads discover the significant word that, hidden in a corner of a sheet soon to be consigned to the waste heap, gives a clue to imminent rupture or disaster, must have skill and thought. The modern press is an ancient church where Tibetan prayer mills have taken the place of chanting priests. The public drifts in and out several times a day and bows in absent-minded fashion before the empty, innumerable images of the past. Gonzague had a confused appreciation of the futility of the process and sought communion with real life in the police court news. But news editors are as blind to the grave truths of a crime as to the ominous silence that lies over the world.

The Energetic Individual arrived and read his mail. Love letters . . . a sordid love, dimly conscious that somewhere, outside the office walls, in cities, here and there on the earth, there were such things as men. To their accomplices they confided their wretched desires. Of what tribe were they? Eaters of mud, fakirs mumbling the sacred figures.

"Ah, if you could get us that ton of manganese. With what ardent love do we not covet it! If you but knew what fine and profitable things we should make out of it. Do you say yes? All we possess is yours for the asking, save only our hearts."

"De Beers . . . 425, 425. I read it in the heavens they are going up. See there in the firmament the De Beer star. 450, 460 . . . Just a trifle cash, please, and I will pray for you."

Answers thereto are dictated drily to stenographers. Incessant telephone calls and cables; at the end of the wires, men, veiled after the manner of women.

The loom is at work again. Action is made up of a thousand nothings. What a confused activity of men in offices to prolong the machine-like toil of the workman in the shop. What is it all about? No man knows, but, since for the moment there are no wars or pestilences or famines, as well busy himself with this. What an array of middlemen, discoverers, denominators, profiteers, hindrances, blackmailers, blunderers between that first for-

tuitous contract between worker and employer and that vague last act of the customer buying an article. What a marvellous muddle, what a sweet mixup! What a wealth of abstract variations on so simple a theme!

Gonzague hurried through his job and fled from the horror he was part of, running elsewhere, full of disgust with what he was going to do there, possessed by the sole overmastering sensation of passing from one thing to another. He had imposed his mad ways on his employer. He spent hours between the hairdresser, the manicurer, the pedicurist, the saloon, the cafés where he placed his bets, telephoned, sipped drinks, telephoned again and led a thousand petty intrigues. He lunched here and dined there. He even paid a few calls. He was too easy-going and timid to have a host of such caravanserais, but six or seven houses visited once a week suffice to fill up the days.

At long last the evening; dinner sprawled out till ten, then one act at the play, or preferably three numbers at a music hall or a circus, or the dying five minutes of a concert programme. He got in everywhere without paying, a privilege he shared with a thousand other obscure persons, each of whom glowed with the thought that this was fame. Then he dragged himself through the saloons, the cabarets, the dope dens, the gambling houses, even one or two drawing rooms where some young bourgeois couple tried to play at being Mæcenas on a hundred thousand francs a year.

Yet all this fury of movement was in fine but dull stillness, lotus eating, futile waiting.

Business men had no patience with his temperament; they recognised that his heart was not in his talk with them, that, despite all encouragements, he showed no disposition to pin his faith to the business spirit. So, in disgust, they neglected him.

Thus it was everywhere. In any company, Gonzague launched himself into a labyrinth of brilliant talk that kept him apart from things; he attained apparent fixity through the very fury of his mental movement, a sort of internal shimmy, and while taking a part in proceedings, seemed not to be of them. The result was profoundly

unsatisfactory to himself. He spent hours in dancing saloons; to balls he went no longer, for a very good reason, namely that he did not dance. That in itself is half the road to being separated from womankind; incidentally it deprives one of an asset that makes up for plainness, poverty or lack of social standing. Non-dancers in the world of amusement form a class apart, pariahs who on the stage of love play the secondary or the ludicrous rôles. Not that women, even of the dancing saloon type, necessarily dislike non-dancers, far from it; but they become naturally separated from them. The victims acquire habits of solitude or self-abasement; their only resource is a platonic, more or less intellectual, liaison.

Thus Gonzague, being everywhere, was nowhere. He always remained outside the gates. Then, his lack of money did not help matters. He did earn a little; some from the Energetic Individual, some from various trifling affairs of his own. But taxis, restaurants, bars, cigarettes and cigars, tailors and hosiers, and gambling, melted down his coin speedily. He borrowed here and there, from friends, from relations, from his employer, and, somehow, he managed to carry on. But he was always short. Hence an incessant anxiety. Little by little want, and the sense of failure, crystallised in obscure fashion around this question of money.

Gonzague cared too little for his *ego,* had too liberal a sense of his qualities, too feeble a hankering after grandeur, too little yearning after social hegemony to ever amass a fortune. Want did not embitter him, for he was easily beguiled by small amusements; but it made him impatient at times; he kicked against the pricks.

It was this feeling that made him, who affected so great a contempt for the bourgeois morals and ways of his parents, live even more sparingly than they. Between the sum of his appetites fed by a lively imagination and the amount of cash at his disposal there was a vast gulf; pride might have made him bridge it, but he never could make up his mind to it, and he was content to drift on in his pettifoggying yet passionate way. For instance: he could live without an automobile, but he reckoned this dimin-

ished his general sensitiveness by fifty per cent. For other reasons he avoided the realm of sport, where the poorest may be king. The only wealth he enjoyed, and that in sardonic fashion, was that of his friends.

He sought a hundred wordy outlets: announced that he would sell himself, kill himself, or in three weeks write a novel the censorship might ban but the public would buy. He cast his eye on one of the literary prizes open for competition, and spent an entire evening calculating how many words a day he would have to write in order to get his manuscript ready in time.

One summer, at a health resort, he made overtures to a girl in quite a decent financial position, but he started by telling her candidly that he had an eye on her money. Even so he might have succeeded had he put some ginger into his wooing.

Once or twice he talked vaguely of emigrating to some country where there was money to be made.

Literary success, however, was what he most seriously considered. Not that he wrote, but he consorted assiduously with those who did. For a time these young writers savoured the joy occasioned by his calculated confusion, his clumsy modernism and the loving care with which he used such advantages as he possessed over them. They distrusted their own job just sufficiently for the doings of a Philistine among them to cause a sensation like that which agitates some salons on the appearance of a celebrated man of letters. For a few days, Gonzague incorporated fairly well their ideal naïvely, unexpectedly, amusingly. Symbols of personality were either broken or perverted. The mind created new ways for each day, and smashed them up before the day was over. The will was jumpy; seeming to collapse, then suddenly resurging almost brilliantly. The passions were not fought down, but led along devious paths to surprising issues. At any price unity and continuity must be broken. Any violent action was good that gave them the sensation of energetic achievement: negation, paradox, illogicality, contradiction, in short any of the conceivable combinations of intelligence, and they are as varied and innumerable as

those of love. But, by dint of such gross exercises, the mind tired and thickened. Then those whose consuming fear was that some idea might attain fixity, form a sort of mental barrage and arrest the perpetual motion that seemed to them synonymous with cerebral well-being, fell ready victims to the first trifle that happened along. A Gonzague who was full of such trifles, oddities and tricks, made a decided impression on them.

But the mind after all is not a pneumatic machine. Mere negations do not kill prejudices, and to extirpate these is as painful an operation as to tear out one's soul. These comrades of Gonzague's loved life and the instinct of it was strong within them; it led to sudden awakenings out of these persistent siestas. So, one fine day, they looked upon Gonzague with eyes become obtuse, replete with stern condemnation born during their long sleep. That day they cast him out from among them, with jeers and a running fire of the worst, most passion-laden reasons that occurred to them. That, however, was a good deal later. . . .

In the meantime their games and torments were often commonplace. Each would hop from one bizarre discovery to another, hoping always that their neighbour would be a second or two behind time. And, since the field of the extraordinary had long been exhausted, they turned back to the infancy of art and progressed wilfully crabways. They would stop of a sudden in front of the Arc de Triomphe and say: "How fine that is, because it wanted to be fine, and is." Then on to Luna Park to remark: "How fine that is because it is rotten."

Within the space of a fortnight, Gonzague discovered to his friends a popular singer, whose fame was twenty years old, a provincial actor who had just leased the Guignol in the Champs Elysées, a somnambulist, the blind man on the Pont des Arts, the bluebeard Landru, a woman of no importance and last but not least, the genius of Alfred de Musset.

Despite these brilliant successes, he was savagely sad. He felt his ascendancy was slipping away. He would then shun his companions for part of the time. Although he

never lost their little manias that, like witch doctors' tricks, invested him wherever he went with a magical atmosphere, he well knew that not in this way could he deceive his own desires.

So he resorted to exaggerated processes. He talked of suicide. Confident in the inexhaustible gullibility of mankind, he set to rediscover that least attractive of police court items. The method adopted was to show that the act of suicide, which has in its time played a capital part in the life of many men of action and feeling, was the most unfashionable, boring, undistinguished of the rites a man follows between his confirmation and his burial service. It was for him an easy task to demonstrate the futility, the commonness, the stupidity, the laughableness of this great coup by which a man seeks to cram all the trumps into his hand.

But how to slip out of that phase, to reverse the process and out of contemptuous condemnation draw shining justification? Do you ask? You have not understood the situation at all: there is no need to change direction, you need only go straight ahead. This act, ridiculous, absurd, rather merely stupid, becomes admissible by applying a simple formula: "In going to bed of a morning, instead of pressing on the electric switch, by a deplorable mistake, I press the trigger of an automatic."

This filled Gonzague and his friends with an intense delight. For the time he was rehabilitated, he was effulgent with grace and glory. He had conquered suicide. He hardly knew whether he was alive or dead, whether he had pressed the trigger or merely let off a squib during the night.

To add to this state of bliss, the Energetic Individual dispensed with Gonzague's services.

Gonzague kept a taxi going all night to use up his last cash in sordid saloons. That taxi ended by depositing him on my doorstep. I slammed the door to; I had enough; I quitted Gonzague forever.

I got an invitation to spend the month of September in the Balearic Isles, where Gertrude had rigged up an ancient pirates' nest.

I arrived and found Gonzague.

With our usual affectation of rudeness, or a perverse love of truth, I informed him bluntly of my displeasure at seeing him again. He showed himself delighted at this proof of my interest and, during the superstitious rites with which we daily worshipped the sun on the seashore, he never failed to lie down by my side.

In her relations with men, Gertrude was very prudent; she was somewhat free in her language, which was calculated to give a false impression, but for the rest she reserved herself for her husband, who duly appeared in the following winter, in the shape of an inveterate golf fiend, who, however, seemed hardly the sort of man to keep a woman in order.

Meanwhile Gertrude was pursuing her theoretic studies in sensuousness. Part of this cult was her self-imposed task of exposing us to the rays of the sun. A number of our contemporaries, devotees of drugs or of a certain kind of literature, have discovered sport. For them, sport has never been either a taste or a passion, but has promptly become a mania. They are haunted by the neo-classical idea of health, of preservation, just as others by the romantic notions of destruction and death. It is only an idea, and demands no great effort from them; for instance, they submit their bodies passively to the action of the sun to the end of filling themselves with a mysterious vitality. In a short time, as is the wont of mankind, they lose sight of the object; a symbol is enough to keep the mind busy. The question is no longer one of attaining health, but rather of showing off a well-tanned skin on one's return to Paris. To women it is a kind of cosmetic.

In pursuance of this idea we spent about five hours a day in tanning ourselves. Punctually at ten o'clock we climbed down from the pirates' nest and, until one or two, remained stretched out, in a state of almost complete nudity, our only garments being tortoise shell glasses and a copy of the *Nouvelle Revue Française*. The sun, though it should have been astonished at our rashness and our anachronistic behaviour of demigods, had no qualms, but beat down on us mercilessly.

The punishment was a mild one. Then we plunged into the sea, after observing all the prescriptions of Swedish gymnasts whose religion is made up of the most unexpected tricks of machinelike athletics. This was all quite pleasant. Gertrude had fine body lines, which were good to look upon. Risqué witticisms curled up and died under the scorching Balearic sun in a few days, and our talk became as orderly as the twenty-four hours of the daily round.

Those among us who possessed wives had no intention of adventuring them among these unmarried ones; rather did we envy them. Things got easy in this world of fire and water. Many Frenchmen could live their days in innocence, but cannot enjoy innocence in their cities, where they excite each other to monotonous excesses.

Gonzague no longer irritated my nerves, for I no longer had any nerves; or, if I had, they were busy transmitting orders to my muscles, as instructors on a barrack square. Besides Gonzague was showing another side of himself.

From the very first morning, due to some word or gesture I cannot precisely recall, we had exchanged looks and understood that this trembling Gonzague was, like so many others, made for the lazy, lotus-eating life of the negro. Let the woman crush the corn; what time the man shall smoke his pipe. Let us abandon ourselves for a while to the improbable bliss of our ancestors. Gertrude, pass me the 'baccy! And to think that there were those among them, three thousand years ago, who dreamed of shutting themselves up in a banker's office! Life is invaded by the columns of figures oozing out of cash registers like Australia by the cactus plant, and as the destructive worm bores its paths through timber, so thousands of telephone calls eat into the very soul of man.

There have ever been among men throughout the ages two main watches, starboard and port: those who were born for the future and those who were born for the past. Speak not of the stupidly indifferent, but praise the princelike ones who are ever content and who, by either prophecy or memory, succeed in enjoying all their days.

Gonzague slept often, or pretended to sleep, but in our games his superiority was manifest. At meals, his appetite was on a par with his good humour. He spoke less and grinned less; he could even bring himself to talk of absent acquaintances without that fever which possessed him in Paris and made him within a few minutes apply the rod to the victim's back and then lose himself in reticent cautious qualifications as if the slandered one had been present and ready to exact summary vengeance. True, at the very last minute he usually returned to the attack, as if through fear of having been cowardly generous or especially of having overestimated some one's intelligence.

Joan of Arc Daimler descended upon us with the last boat. An American? Or a European? No one knew with certainty, which was the very reason why Gertrude had invited her. The obvious explanation would have been that she was a Jewess. But that was not the case. We only knew positively one thing about her: that somewhere in the States she had a husband who lent her his name and sent her some of his dollars, which, to our imaginative minds, made the young woman smack of the world of fairies.

She would occasionally speak of her origins, but in such a way that no one could make head or tail of them. The only sure bond that linked her to anyone was that with her mother, who appeared to have been possessed of the twin spirits of travel and love. One man at least could be quite certain of not being her father: that was the Hungarian who, at the time of Joan's birth, was the husband of her mother. The latter had made that much quite clear to her daughter, as if to give her at least one fact to go upon.

Gonzague rubbed his hands and gazed at her. All he saw was a vague indication of prestige, and he was delighted. The name "Joan of Arc Daimler" was nothing but a quaint collection of sounds. She was nameless. Ignorant of life, having, so to speak, not yet recognised the different component bits of herself that kept arriving from every corner of the world, she had never succeeded in coming to an agreement with herself. She would doubt-

less attain to it in time. Cosmopolism is the most elemental and the least lasting of states. True, Joan had trailed through hotels, liners and express trains. But she had passed all her early youth in Paris, in the Isle Saint Louis, and she had there received from a priest an exceedingly well-ordered culture. She was by no means a little fool.

This young woman of twenty-three had just been let loose by her husband, who, after an entire year of amiable love-making, had been suddenly seized by the genius for business. She had money and she was strolling around. She was serious, perhaps for a few years, perhaps forever, being therein like many of her sex.

Some pronounced her silly, some intelligent. She was tall, not to be called thin, though her thickish bones were only covered with fine muscles and brown skin. A small head, a prominent forehead, a nose that grew out of a deep depression and was obliged to elongate itself in order to give the profile the requisite curve, lips that were folded inwards on an almost imperceptible smile that, though it looked eternal must, I imagine, have come to an end some day or other. The chin? . . . but, enough.

I have no idea whether from this description you have formed a mental picture of Joan. I, who only write this tale to pass the time, and who, be it said, am beginning to get tired of it, get no clear picture of her at all. I never notice the colour of people's eyes. Besides Joan is quite a secondary member of the cast.

I am crazy about new acquaintances: when two beings appear together before me for the first time, I am prone to think that by virtue of this meeting, everything is thrown back into the melting pot. The most cast-iron life, or the most exhausted one, may take an unexpected course, may swell out to new proportions.

It became speedily clear that Mrs. Daimler had selected Gonzague for notice, and that gentleman was, for his part, also a little moved. The choices of love are explicable: one can always give satisfying reasons for them, reasons that can be reduced to arithmetical processes: addition and subtraction. Gonzague had a pull over the other

males present. In our trips and sports, he showed his mastery. In conversation too he shone above the rest through a vain, irresistible abundance. None of us were likely to disturb his confidence. Three were married and busied themselves with their wives, for a change, being wearied of adventures. So were the three bachelors who were overfed on the luxurious opportunities of Paris.

Since Mrs. Daimler was neither experienced nor a coquette, she turned naturally to the only available bachelor. Of course merely out of a desire for comfort, to get some one to fetch and carry for her and to take her out for walks. Satisfying reasons, surely.

Joan and Gonzague did not interest so much as intrigue each other. Which gave intense satisfaction to Gertrude. She fondly dreamed of complications. Having given herself the illusion that complications existed, she proceeded to infect them with her belief. Very often she would take the American aside and, as the saying goes, "pump" her:

"How do you find Gonzague?"

"A charming boy. Who is he?"

"A very strange boy, as you will discover."

"Indeed? In what way is he strange?"

"You'd never guess. But he is a queer stick."

"Oh, but, do tell me . . ."

"For one thing, he is terribly clear-seeing, difficult to catch. I have never yet seen him really caught by a woman."

"He does not seem to bother much about them."

"Yes, he does. But he plays a hiding game."

"Think so?"

Joan was not panting for adventure; but all humans are ever on the *qui vive,* and there is not one of them who is not ready to let go a worthless prey for a good shadow.

Shall I relate the flirtation she had with Gonzague? Nay, I am too lazy, likewise too prudent, to do any such thing. Yet it would be amusing if I could describe the tergiversations of a man and a woman.

Gonzague asked Joan many questions. He rained down questions upon her, indiscreet and whimsical ones. Joan listened: she had after all not come back to France to revisit

the Louvre and she was quite willing to study that French mind that finds its eternal training ground in the topic of love.

"Do you love your husband?" First evening; first cigarette.

"Your queries are too vague for answers."

"All right. Do you like love?"

"One can never be sure of such things save by making comparisons."

"Even then it is doubtful . . ." Gertrude chimed in.

"Do you feel the genius of love within you?"

"What about you?"

"Oh . . . I . . ."

"Well?"

"Oh, I miss the train. I am a non-starter. Yet I study the time tables. I think I remain behind because I have but little money, and I have never met a suitable travelling companion. The former reason is sufficient in itself; besides it implies the second."

"Think so? You are very young."

"Surely you have not considered yourself in a looking-glass."

No, truly, we cannot follow up this conversation, which is full of juvenile pedantry; it has too many maxims, too little reality.

After having thus toyed with the subject of love, they went on the next day to discuss their conception of life. These are indeed the only two subjects open to discussion by two beings who, however obscurely, are seeking to get to know each other by means other than those of pure reason. When the talk is of love, it is the woman who is under examination; she affects not to answer, or, in ultra modern manner, retorts by such daring phrases that they miss their effect entirely. But when the topics are conduct, motives, hidden ends, it is the man who speaks, and there is no stopping the flow of his words. The woman listens, she is ironical, she misconstrues.

Even so Joan:

"What do you do in life?"

"Nothing."

"That cannot be true."

"Oh, a lot of things that bore me."

"What, for instance?"

"Business, literature, and such like."

"But surely that is varied, amusing doing."

"I don't do any of it very well."

"So much the worse for you. You make me sick. How can you be so inane as to talk to me of the mediocrities you do? It is as if you were to present me with a bouquet of faded flowers."

"Quite an idea! Some day I will give Gertrude one. She will be profoundly moved. For the rest, I have no intention of presenting you with flowers. I am not sentenced to wooing you."

"Not being a genuine brute, you ought at least to be witty."

"You seemingly like character comedies."

"Say rather I like character."

"Women are bad judges; their point of view is too restricted. Besides, what is character? The absence of it."

"Ah, it is true. Gertrude told me you are a writer."

"No, no, I don't write. I swear I don't. Perhaps because I have no talent."

"Go and sail your own canoe."

Gonzague committed every possible folly. He was still under the evil spell of his existence in saloons with the rich ones of the earth, in cafés with the poor. He had broad enough shoulders, yet he felt himself puny in front of this tourist who was seeking for reasons to admire him. It occurred to her that though he said everything he ought not to say, he looked very passable in his bathing costume. By itself this would not have decided things. But a light began to be visible in Gonzague's eyes.

Gertrude was delighted and said:

"I am positive Gonzague has had the most astounding adventures. Only, he differs from you in that he is discreet. A fine fellow. I am madly taken with him just now."

In these latter days we have cultivated a persistency which, if it does not make us believe in the impeccability of our manners, at least gives us a sense of nerve keenness.

We all strove with excessive ardour to favour the intrigue between Joan and Gonzague. Not without skill; there is something of the matchmaker in most of us moderns. Yet the two people in question began to suffer from this electrical atmosphere; their own sensations were too much at the mercy of the sensitiveness of their companions. They were themselves sensitive, and they began to get disgusted with their own words, that echoed in their ears like talk in an empty house where one is not quite sure whether one cannot be overheard.

Could even actions have saved them from this spell? They were being so closely spied upon. At each meal time, we would minutely examine their lips.

Joan came to a point where she had enough; she manifested her Anglo-Saxonism. Since Gonzague proved hesitant, she took him literally, and she held him at arm's length. For two or three days he had been jaunty, almost cheeky. From that moment he fell back into his old ways. One after the other, men, women, domestics, he took us aside, confided in us his blasted hopes, the nearness to achievement he had reached, the violent desire he had had of succeeding, and the rout of his aspirations.

Gertrude was again delighted, at his discomfiture this time. She had pinned her faith to the normal humanity of Gonzague. As in this Balearic Isle there was nought else to do, I discussed the matter with her:

"Your Gonzague is just like all other people."

"That depends . . ."

"The first female who trots along sends him into a state of agitation. Did you not notice how sadly he gazed upon Mrs. Daimler during the whole of lunch?"

"He is sensitive, which, by the way, you would never credit. But rest assured he does not lose his head. Though Joan would be worth it. I really find she has a distinction, a . . ."

"Nonsense! That sort of woman does not exist. She may arise some day. Besides, she is not a genuine American. You know perfectly well, Gertrude, you cannot defend her. Come now, between you and me and the lamp-post?"

Gertrude was visibly swelling with vanity.

"Well, but let us assume that Gonzague is himself, and that there is nothing more than amusement in question."

"No, he is not amusing himself at all."

At this juncture a Spanish nobleman who was living in the vicinity put in an appearance. With one look, he made it perfectly clear to Mrs. Daimler why she had come to the Balearic Isles. One word in explanation of Mrs. Daimler. She had taken the steamer out of sheer love for old things; at least, so she thought. That is a misunderstanding common on both sides of the Atlantic, which makes for much prosperity of the shipping companies. In reality, love of old times is just love of youth. What we cherish the past for is just that it contained youth. What the Americans love over on our side, say in the Baltic or the Mediterranean, is a persistent, well preserved youth. Nowhere could Joan have found this in more perfect state than in this Spaniard, pickled as he was by his superfine civilisation.

Gonzague, on the other hand, was ambiguous, uncertain, a cross between his own innovations and the ways of his father; that was not the thing for Joan, who asked us what on earth we thought we were seeking from Arabs, Indians or Persians.

But we are not as old as the Americans, the oldest of known people. Their senility is made up of all the world's antiquities. Some day they will get beyond it to a new birth, where their originality will get play. In the meantime they are older than Europeans, for they are more advanced in mechanics, more abstract, more divorced from Nature in her ingenuousness, compact as it is with passion and suffering, anguish and mystery. Their average age is fifty, whereas ours is forty.

So the Spaniard had only to appear on the scene for Gonzague to fall back into the ranks.

Some days later, Gonzague and I were scouting in the quarter of Marseilles known as the Vieux Port. He seemed on familiar ground, and led me to a place of no pleasant repute.

"Oh, you will see, it is not very proper. But, still, it is not too bad."

Feeling that he was insistent, I had my curiosity

spurred, and, without enthusiasm, however, accepted his proposal. The place was just such as I had imagined: dirty, sad, commonplace. The only thing that impressed me was the curious gaze Gonzague directed upon an ancient female, witch-like, with savagely painted cheeks.

I was observing him slily, but the stuffy smell, like that of a musty employment agency office, compelled a swift exit. I even left my beer untasted. He followed me.

"What did you run away for, Gonzague? It seemed to interest you."

"Yes, it did, somewhat."

We wandered on. The night was very warm, and we stopped here and there for a drink. Gonzague sighed frequently and smoked cigarette after cigarette.

"I have a craving for adventure tonight," he said. "Love adventure."

"Mrs. Daimler?"

"No. Far too beautiful."

"H'm, too beautiful?"

"She was a fine creature; so was the Spaniard. Well, I have no inclination that way."

"Don't try on airs of virtue. You were only once in Marseilles before, last year, but you seem to have scouted the place well, and the old hag appeared to recognise you."

"Yes . . . you see, even my virtue is a fraud. Too beautiful, also."

"I suspect as much."

"Come, come, confess you are no more of a saint than other men. Besides, I was pulling your leg. I am quite virtuous."

"You are becoming ridiculous with your petty mysteries. Speak out, and then let us bury the subject."

"What do you want me to tell you? I have nothing to say, nothing at all."

"This: you like women such as the one we have just seen. Confess that the reason you are so reserved with pretty, ordinary women is that you prefer the ugly . . ."

"You are incorrigible. Whenever you get a new theory, you let go all the rest. You should not let go the rest. I am a little more complex."

"Oh?"

"From time to time, but not habitually, I do enjoy the company of such a woman."

"That is your nature, I suppose?"

"No, no. You do not understand . . ."

"But this love affair you are supposed to have had during the war for some girl who wrote, or made statuary, I forget which. How far did you get with that?"

For a moment, Gonzague was silent.

" . . . Madame Lemberg! Ah, true, I had never mentioned her to you."

And forthwith he started telling me a vague adventure, with great abundance of words, and evident satisfaction at having found a subject relating to himself with which to fill the passing hours. He got himself rather tied up into knots, jumped some points, could not fix others right, returned incessantly to some. I had to stop him, to question him, to meditate. Or, did I really go to all that trouble?

It was at the beginning of the war, when he was eighteen. He was a good-looking boy; his over-regular features had not yet acquired their present sharpness, his pale eyes were dreamy still, and he had not developed that well-rounded muscular system that somehow contrasted with the angularity of his mind.

A friend took him to Madame Lemberg. The woman was only twenty-five, sleepy and with little ambition. She had recently recovered from shattered illusions about her husband, and was mildly excited by æsthetic cravings wherewith she clothed appetites and weaknesses. She dreamed of a love affair of which she only saw the theatrical side. Gonzague's troublous eyes inspired her with a hope of emotion. His physical appearance was comforting. During an entire evening, Gonzague could hug the belief that he, a youth, had a chance of being loved by a fine looking woman. This seemed to him marvellous, for at that time he was no cynic. Madame Lemberg's beauty was of the coarser order, a feature emphasised by a pedantic taste in picturesque clothing, and the silly stillness of a modern woman who seeks to absorb every drop of the joy that offers. She was well housed and entertained many people,

all of whom were familiar mutual friends. She had a certain notoriety as an artist because the world insisted in reading a little of her personal charms into the objects she exposed at the Salon.

On the morrow of this meeting, Gonzague hastened to confide his vain emotion to a friend whom he insisted on dragging along that very evening to inspect this unexpected and flattering treasure. Alas! He intercepted in the first moment an unequivocal look between Madame and this youth who, in his slightly effeminate way, was better looking than Gonzague and who, with great skill, won sympathy by affecting to love good things. His mouth could pout beautifully. No doubt after it had bitten the fruit, the same mouth would show utter disgust, and the loved one would know hours of bitter anxiety.

Madame Lemberg pretended to hesitate for a while. She did not forget the joys of having a choice to make. And, being both very young, the candidates for her favour showed no impatience. They were buoyed up by their imagination, affected, in order to seem clever and experienced, to be in no hurry for the realisation of their desires, and generally wasted time in easy dreaming. Many young men who have had a soft upbringing are, at the age of eighteen, as yet unformed. Some, who have been spoiled by their mother, seek the same tenderness in a sweetheart. The same cause, in others, operates to keep them away from women.

Sometimes Madame Lemberg would turn away from the graceful prettiness of the last comer to admire the heavier charms of Gonzague. She liked both, and was not of a mind ever to deprive herself of what she liked, nor did she want to lose the imperceptible prerogatives which that first evening had given her.

The war helped this unequal contest, for the two swains, of whom one—and that was not Gonzague—had become the effective lover of the lady, were sent one to an aviation camp, the other to a motor transport depot. Turn about, they came to Paris.

Gonzague was a prey to mixed feelings: pride advised him to leave the field, but the disappointment at being alone in these barracks, and the memory of contacts that had

seemed to hold the promise of a caress, brought him back to the object of his dreams. But, through unfortunate circumstances and his own disposition, these dreams themselves tended to become ever more distant, more misty, less secure. Still, when he visited her, she received him, which gave him a little firmness. He did not see that his position was much stronger than it seemed, and derived a minimum of benefit from it, which is not complimentary to him.

Gonzague's friend, whom Madame had preferred to him, only attracted her in a physical way. He was quick, and she enjoyed his tokens of tenderness.

What had attracted her in Gonzague's eyes, on the other hand, although she did not realise it, was precisely that which was not there.

Gonzague was no wiser in the matter than the lady. And that state of affairs lasted a long while. In the first place there was the war. Who, during the war, especially of those who had not tasted of its grim realities, did not experience an unusual delight in pathetic situations?

"Gonzague, when did you first take drugs?"

"Funny you should ask that. It was just at that time. My company captain, a degenerate of sorts, used to invite me to his quarters in the evening. He offered me cocaine. Once, I accepted. I found it so jolly smart."

"My poor old Gonzague!"

"There was another boy there. As I did not seem very keen, the captain turned his attention to him. I was a little . . . well, gone; lying on a divan. So were the other two. I don't quite know what happened after that . . . no, truly, on my word, I don't. That is perhaps why people told you I was of that kidney."

I looked at him. He was tanned, salt-sprayed, the result of a month of healthy, happy life. Health oozed out of him; he seemed two hundred miles away from these sordid follies. But I could easily conjure up another Gonzague, exasperated and unnerved by military conditions, towards the end of the war, when men and women felt that the great adventure was drawing to a close.

I suddenly remembered a long-forgotten confession he had made to me in the first days of our acquaintance. It

had not struck me at the time, for in fine it was sufficiently commonplace, and my silliness had not at that time driven me to spin a mystery out of the little ways of this man. He had boasted of having been once, for three months, in Lyons, the lover of the smartest woman in the town. And they took dope together.

Clearly, drugs explained one side of Gonzague. Not that he ever indulged in them to any great extent, but their use blunts the sense of sex. Moreover, dope victims infect with their ideas those with whom they consort, people who, while they do not share their vice, yet are interested in it. In this way doubtless had Gonzague been able to hold himself aloof from Madame Lemberg, from women, from all that lives. Poor boy, devoid of genius, he had mixed up together the frenzy of the front with the drunkenness of the base. His father, a weakling who was too fearful not to realise that his son, flesh of his flesh, would have a like fear, had seen to it that he was never sent to more dangerous posts than artillery camps on the outskirts of Paris, or the cabarets of Montmartre. Of the great adventure the only thing he knew was the ashes of the camp fires of those who had entrained for the front. He had lost some puny stake in a bar or a drawing room, what time others played their big gamble elsewhere, in heaven or in hell.

Once or twice his warm blood had risen against such insipidity. With arms that had once been a little hardened by . . . tennis, he had seized and held tight this woman, this Madame Lemberg who would surely now yield at long last.

But some clumsy word, some allusion to the other, of whom he was not even really jealous, allowed his prey to escape. She wanted to be conquered, yet she imposed silence on him, and sank like a stone into one of these torpid, vague states of bliss which unsatisfied women know how to produce the while they press a mere image to their hearts.

"I was telling you," repeated Gonzague, "that I have never known a woman."

"In France, though people call it the Land of Pleasure, there are many men in your case. But they are ugly, or

poor, or timid, or virtuous; whereas you . . .? You are well built."

"I seem to recall, my dear fellow, that you confided in a mutual friend that my handsomeness was very coarse."

"Perhaps, but I added that you probably had nobility of mind. You have perhaps only written one article in your life. But that is not the question either. That something obvious, expected, that does form part of your charm should win you any kind of woman. You might have begun, if you cared, with women of easy virtue; the others would have come in their turn."

"I should have had to have begun very young. I am twenty-three and it is too late now. I have the worst of reputations and yet have none."

"But you were not timid . . ."

"There is a delicacy in me that does not appear in my features nor in my manners, but its shadow passed over me and froze up the vigour I might have shown when young."

"Vigour? Vigour? Yes, if you like. In a quieter age you would have been a fat monk who feeds well and avoids other pitfalls of the flesh without effort. Some people find between their desire and their being, some little troubling idol, some almost imperceptible lack. But you are not of these. You are like so many others to whom Nature only gives free play at her own time and to her own ends. Religion was hardly in conflict with Nature when she sent such as they careening along the road of celibacy."

"Ah, well, I have acquired the habit of looking at women from afar."

"But your imagination?"

"I have little imagination."

"That is a delicate point. Do you not, in your mind, see women?"

"Hardly. When I do, and that is seldom, for I live in a void, or else I am telephoning—I see dim outlines, fully dressed in faldelals. What possesses me at such moments is nothing sensual; nothing that has to do with eyes or finger or nose; it is a verdict on my own character. I say to myself, thou hast no power over such beings."

"And when you are away from women, does nothing ever

suggest them to your mind? None of these sudden mental changes that put the bodies of them so close that you could almost touch them with your hand? I know that bodily contacts are only possible if they are preceded by contact in the imagination, without effort and without hitch. Then it must be that you lack physical vigour. That force that inspires or upholds the movement of your spirit does not come from the center of your being? And when you are near them . . ."

"I am perfectly normal. I play my part with the most irreproachable propriety. Don't see in this a revolt of my vanity; I truly believe that in this matter I am void of vanity."

"H'm."

"But I assure you, when I am alone with a woman, I behave quite naturally. The women of whom you spoke a while ago are the only ones who have ever urged me. It was their trade. I encountered them daily on my way home, on the pavement. I used to go with them in order to avoid having to say 'No' to them. If an ordinary woman had done it . . ."

"Perhaps they do."

"Still, I am hardly encouraging."

"Did you experience no disgust?"

"I tried not to look at them."

"But you endured their caresses."

"Dear, no . . . I could not have borne that. Unaided, without provocation, I merely followed them, and . . ."

Gonzague was really fine.

" . . . then I hastened away."

"Why have you given it up?"

"Because I moved to a new address. They do not frequent the part of the town I live in now."

"Then you mean to say that from one day to the other. . ."

"Of course, from one day to the other. Quite suddenly."

"For how long?"

"Oh, months, years."

"There must have been something else. Was there?"

"Perhaps. But one day I found that, too, was vain. My whole life, you know, is so perfectly vain."

He was yawning.

"It is all rather a bore to me. I wish I was like everybody else."

"But you are like everybody else."

"Think so? Good night."

THE MIRACLE

By GEORGES DUHAMEL

(From *Les Contemporains*)

TODAY, perhaps, the miracle will take place.

Oh, what inaction! How long they must wait before they achieve that pain without which they must remain forever deprived of a real human face!

And so they wait, patiently. . . .

Indeed, they struggle against such thoughts: they are proud, they appear calm, detached. They pretend they look forward to the coming of the quartermaster, the mess-hour or the orderly. But everything about them betrays an obstinate and infinite sense of expectation. They are waiting for the miracle that is bound to happen the moment somebody takes their case in hand.

Why should not the miracle happen? You knew Perdrizet: he had only half a face. His mask stopped at his nose: below this were only vague patches of skin, with a slobbering, cretinous mouth.

Now Perdrizet looks like a real man; he has a jaw and a beard. Seeing him from afar, you would take him for an ordinary sort of lad, just like anyone else.

And you knew Louba! His face opened up like a horrible flower; far back you saw his tongue which looked like a live animal, and those monstrous red parts that always remain hidden from man's sight. Now Louba can appear in the street without frightening the children: he has a funny little flat and pink face, with metal devices instead of teeth. These two were visited by the miracle. Why should it be reserved for them alone? Courage is not lacking, nor patience. The flesh is sound, the blood vigorous. And if there is a long ordeal to undergo, well! so be it!

A large room with little pillars; a livid whitewash spreads

its melancholy over the walls. Nobody is to blame for that: if you had to paint walls like these, you would find it a difficult task. It is not sad, but it is not merry either; it is variable, like expectation or hope. The radiant freshness of a March day can do nothing to alter matters; it enters the room but to count the days, it comes to bear its testimony with a sort of indifference. The men pull a bit of mirror from their pockets and furtively take stock of the unjust ugliness that has fallen upon their faces.

And yet they are not ugly. I know them well and I tell you they are not ugly. They know it, too, and when they murmur "Lord! what a face!" in a voice devoid of almost every means of expressing itself, they are not alluding to what we used to call ugliness before the war.

They are beyond all ugliness and all beauty. They belong to an exceptional world. For the most part, they can no longer be ugly because they no longer boast of enough of a face to be ugly!

People with a nose, a mouth, a jaw, a pair of eyes and ears, may put them to a worthless use or they may suffer from an unfortunate arrangement of these precious organs. They may think ridiculous or obscene thoughts that show on their faces. But the men in this place are to a terrible extent free from a like servitude: their mutilation delivers them from human ugliness. Sometimes, however, it leaves them the inexplicable and laborious splendor of a smile, for the human soul requires no such complicated apparatus to manifest its purity as to betray its weakness.

Almost all the men are on their feet. Some of them are still in bed because they were struck not only in the head but also in the legs or in the stomach. The others are walking about the room reading, writing, or forming a group around some game. Some of them are smoking: they push their pipe-stems into a cavity which cannot always be termed a mouth.

The fortunate ones, the miraculous, are almost never seen in this ward again; they have left to take their place in life once more. From time to time they return out of gratitude or because some stitch in the mysterious embroidery requires delicate retouching by the thaumaturge.

These men here have still almost everything to wait for at the hands of the supernatural man who sculps in flesh and who applies himself to the task of the Almighty.

It is a large but dense room. There are many beds in it; they form several rows. Each bed is a little home in the midst of this confusion. Each bed bears its burden of knickknacks, of souvenirs, of odd treasures. At the foot of their beds the men receive visitors. Lying on their beds they dream about the faces they may some day possess. It is good they have their tiny home, for usually they spend a long time here. A great deal of leisure and much cunning are necessary to mystify and to dispel misfortune.

The door of the room opens. A tall young man appears. He looks affable and anxious. He is accompanied by others also wearing *écru* coats. Is he just one man among many? By no means! This man is in no wise like the others: he is the miracle-worker.

He hastens across the room. It is as though suddenly every thought and every body moving within this space were attracted towards him, like filings towards a magnet. Those lying in bed, bundled up in their bandages direct their glance and their will brusquely forward. The others crowd to the centre aisle. Many of them contemplate the man who is to save them in silence. Others accost him and make him little hushed confidences that invariably sound like prayers.

He listens to them, gives an answer and a promise, and then passes on.

He would like to say: "Go, and let the face that once was yours be granted you again!"

Miracles no longer work in that way. If faith availed, as in ancient times, in one second all these poor people would be contented, cured, and saved. Unfortunately, our age is a hard one and men are too wise. Miracles still happen, but they are arduous and ungrateful. They no longer yield to a smile from the elect. They must be sought through all manner of suffering and deliberation. They no longer burst upon one; they advance crawling pitiably.

The patient climbs onto the table in a sort of exultant fear. He stretches out, trembling a little in spite of his

determination. Sometimes he seems carried away, beyond himself. He fears and cherishes this minute. For "Facial Cases" are not like other casualties. They have not been robbed of an arm or of a leg; or of anything so precious and yet somewhat foreign to them. They have lost the very image of their soul, the thing that makes them akin to the divine.

That resemblance, then, must be recovered at all price.

"Ten times before we have lain bound on this table that looks like an altar reared to an implacable idol; if necessary, we will offer ourselves up ten times more. The skilful surgeon's patience will be exhausted long before ours. We are in great haste, to be sure, but our determination is greater still. Go ahead, sir! Never mind us! Don't be afraid! Do what must be done! But if by any chance, somehow, we should happen to scream, don't pay any attention! Just carry on! Carry on!"

The benevolent and liberating breath of sleep cannot always be allowed them. The work to be done lies in the mouth and in the nose. So they must be content if merely the ground within the radius of the small, deft knife is put to sleep a little.

The man's wrists are bound together. It is better so, for with the best will in the world, there must be nervous movements. The wrists are bound, but the fingers are free. They clutch the edge of the iron table, and if moments occur when the finger nails scratch the metal, that is because self-control is not always easy.

People with a gangrenous bone in the foot are not always persevering. They want to be cured, and to recover once more their alert pace and graceful agility of former days. But if they suffer too much, they are soon filled with a rancour mingled with discouragement when they consider their foot. They say:

"No! No! Never mind! Let it go! I prefer my pain to this!"

The man whose destroyed face is being sculptured is, on the contrary, animated by a great constancy. He utters a few sharp groans; he takes great pains to swallow or to spit out the blood that fills his throat. As he fears the

surgeon may stop before having perfected his task, he reassures him, consoles him almost. He murmurs:

"It doesn't hurt too much. I must bore you, don't I? It isn't my fault if I . . . Ooh . . . ooh! . . . if I groan like that. It's absurd, but I can't help it! I beg your pardon, sir! It certainly can't be very easy for you to work on me while. . . ."

Sometimes it is imperative that the miracle-worker remain alone, face to face with the bleeding clay. The patient must surrender unconditionally, he must retire to the depths. So they dig a thin dagger-like tube into his neck. Through it, sleep is bestowed upon him. He gasps a little, surrenders and vanishes. He sinks into profound oblivion. He returns to the dreams that obsess him.

"How beautiful the women of today are! How much more graceful and alluring and desirable than women used to be. *I*, too, had a fine moustache; *I* used to say the things men say when they have a pleasant mouth and fine, well-kept teeth, *I*, too, have known what kisses are. *I*, too, looked deep into the eyes of women; it filled my heart with a wild joy that I shall perhaps never know again.

"I am not blind. I still have one eye to contemplate that deformed and monstrous thing that was my face.

"Two months ago I knew a woman. She and I used to walk together on the boulevard. I knotted a triangle of black silk over my scars. I was proud of my wounds and proud of this bit of ribbon they gave me. The woman was not proud enough to find pleasure in me long.

"But then that's not what I want. Nor Bertha, the stenographer, whom I was once engaged to. . . . Oh, I don't know, I don't know now! As it is, I'll have to grow old this way!

"If only he is successful! If only he can do something for me!"

. . . . .

Meanwhile the miracle-worker is busy. He does not look like a god, but like a man, for he suffers while he seeks.

There are times when he is uncertain, diffident, discontented with himself and with the life he must incessantly

evoke. His entire effort is a struggle against an ironic fatality.

There are other times when he is joyful; he knows himself master of the future; he seems inspired. Decisions come easy to him; he is the happy workman of destiny; nothing will be refused him.

The man's entire body offers itself humble to the surgeon. His entire body wishes to coöperate in restoring this outraged face. Every single member of the body is at hand to repair the insult and to obtain justice. So much the better. The entire body will be summoned. The legs will give a bit of bone, the chest a small fragment of rib, even as in the story of our Mother Eve. A little skin will be grafted from the arm, from the breast, from everywhere where the skin is soft, white and supple. Grease also forms valuable little cushions; it will be laid still warm on the thigh, and then thrust into the depths of wounds which must be stopped up.

We are no longer receptive, as trees are. We are too much detached from the common maternal earth. We grow up and grow old in a savage loneliness. Even our overflowing heart cannot prevent our bodily life from being an irremediable exile. The flesh of our own children is forever separated from the old stock. Could it now be grafted onto our own skin which obeys the body's rude laws of itself?

But what comes from me is good for me. If the skin from my foot is transplanted onto my forehead, it will find the customs of its native hearth there, it will perhaps be willing to subsist there; it may even flourish. The entire body wishes to be of service; the head must assume the greater part of the task. Through it courses a rich and potent blood; its tissues are of ample and vigorous fabric. My head must contribute most generously; it includes rich substances which are not to be found elsewhere. Work! Work! The shell, with one blow, created an immense void. In order to fill it, one must combine many little particles of matter teeming with life and good will.

An eyelash is very useful to a man engaged in arduous

labor. An eyelash is not only a stroke of the brush on your face, O Madonna! Everything that goes to make up man's appearance is an ornament, but everything is also of great utility. How can you forget that, O ungrateful soul! The miracle-worker will take a little leather from our temple and spread it, as a painter might do, above our eye. It will produce an eyelash, sketched thick and distinct. There is nothing futile in the proceeding! In our jobs we perspire abundantly, and we must have eyelashes to stop the sweat trickling into our eyes.

The mustache? Yes, I know, you do not boast one, sir! That is because your mouth is well-chiselled. And then you know what to do with your hands while you talk to women. But we—well, we like to pull our mustache when we are embarrassed or when the clock in the office seems to take an age before it strikes six. And anyhow, a bit of a mustache is essential to hide all these scars. So the miracle-worker searches and explores here and there, then cleverly he takes enough hairy skin from the cheek or the scalp to produce a fine sprig of a mustache.

Just wait about three weeks and you'll be able to stroke it, my lad!

. . . . .

There is a great leper-hospital in Paris. It is like a citadel of desolation in the very heart of the forgetful city. There dwell the wretched men whose faces are devoured by hideous maladies. They have practically renounced the world at large to live in a world of their own, where there are trees, streets, public places and buildings, three hundred years old. They marry in their own world; they breed children who are sometimes miserable and sometimes handsome because life has curious, unforeseen breaks.

As for us, we are not patients. All our substance is healthy, and that is exactly why we were chosen and ordained. Our body is not desperate; there is something to be done with it.

We do not intend to spend our entire life cloistered behind these great walls with our torment. The world still knows us and is waiting for us. Make haste! Make haste! The

world must not be given time to forget us. The war is over for everyone. Go ahead, sir, carry on, let it end for us, too, some day.

. . . . .

And the man is taken back to his cot. His dreams die out in incoherent stammering and moans. He will awake in his new image, with his skin well-designed, well-knit and well-sown in every respect, like a tennis-ball.

That is our purpose! That is our wish! Now it must stick! The blood must begin to pass over these small uprooted shreds of skin once more. Every life-cell must take hold of this piece of bone or cartilage and must colonise it, woo it, possess it.

The day after tomorrow the dressing will be removed. The miracle-worker will wear the worried, serious expression he does on the great days, because deep within him, he can be sure of nothing: Too many undisciplined forces are working in concert with him.

Without doubt his long, affable lips will part in a contented smile: each little piece of mosaic will be pink and living; each will have received its naturalisation papers.

We will be patient a few days more, and the young doctor, some morning, will cover our new face with plaster. We will remain attentive and motionless until, with the delicacy of a modeller, he peels off from our flesh a faithful, unexceptional imprint, an imprint a thousand times less variable than our own memory.

. . . . .

In this great miracle-house there is a little room where the plaster-casts hang on the glazed wall in thousands.

It is in this tiny and terrible room that the masters of the universe should have met to discuss the terms of peace.

White, inhumanly pale, the reverse side dark with the dust of years, a multitude of plaster faces perpetuate impossible and unimaginable grimaces to all eternity.

A desolate serenity falls from these walls. At times all the deformed agonized masks seem to take on a single common expression: the divine smile of death.

He must not dwell in this room who would keep his faith in the world.

. . . . .

But those destined to enter the mask room are not many. Soon these tokens will fall asleep in dust, which is more powerful than human memory.

The pious task goes on and the miracle happens every day.

Every day the solicitude of a few men wins certain small victories, and many small victories mean a little solace and forgetfulness. Time will know how to sanctify these works. Nothing in the labors of life can be realised without Time; there is a benevolence that makes one think of God. Almost all the poor people here will go away, one by one, to follow their former path once more and persevere therein. They will gaze at the world with a schematic and entirely new countenance, with almost nothing left of their former face.

Thus it is that the miracle will have visited them. Perhaps we shall be able to glance at them without too much shame.

A MAN'S MAN

By HENRI DUVERNOIS

(From *Le Livre De Demain*)

AT six, Marcel Ourdinneau laid down his pen.

"But the other letters!" the clerk exclaimed.

"What about them? Do you think I'm going to spend the night in the office? You can take two hours for lunch if you like and stay overtime at night, you're a bachelor. All right for you. But not for me. My wife's waiting. Good night."

Ourdinneau pushed the papers away. From the storeroom next door an odor of cotton goods and cloth wafted into the office. A smell of stale ink, of cold cigar smoke seemed to cling to the walls. The desk was covered with stacks of bills, letters, samples, neatly arranged one beside the other. A woman's blonde head, smiling, with rather sad eyes, stood in a silver frame. A sort of dusty light came in through the unpolished windows.

"Those windows need a washing. Why haven't they been cleaned?" Ourdinneau thundered, all of a sudden, and then, without waiting for the answer, took his gloves, his hat and his stick and walked out through the shop. He carried his hat ostentatiously in his hand to set an example of gentlemanly deportment, in the presence of lady customers, for his clerks.

Out on the Boulevard he began to breathe more freely.

He was a tall man, robust and strong, with straight black hair, clean shaven except for a small moustache neatly trimmed like an Englishman's. Although the November day was raw and cold he went without an overcoat, proud of his broad chest and narrow hips, like most well preserved men of forty. He dressed in English materials, a bit flashily, wore broad comfortable shoes of brown leather and low collars allowing his neck ample movement. He

made one think of a boar hunter lost in a woman's furnishing shop. He had a rather high color and his features were regular but brutal. To keep his weight down and his arteries supple he made a point of walking home from the office. He walked with the easy stride of a man who feels sure of himself and his position and who is not troubled by nerves or illness and who wastes no time in speculating about persons or things. His attitude was that of a dominator, and people unconsciously imagined him a leader, a man of wealth. Beggars, for instance, with their instinctive psychology, knew it would be useless to appeal to him. They always left him alone.

As he was about to cross the Boulevard Malesherbes he stopped at the sight of an old man shoving a pushcart. A couple of dogs were harnessed up under the cart and were pulling with all their might, their weak legs standing stiffly against the pavement. One of them, a little black dog, seemed quivering and tottering. All of a sudden its legs gave way and it fell, choking, in the ropes and straps.

"Unharness it," Ourdinneau cried, stopping the old man.

"Has he gone off again?" asked the pushcart man, peering under the cart. "Poor old Pouff, he ain't worth much . . . his heart's bad. . . ."

Freed from the straps the little black dog tried to stand but fell wobbling into the gutter. Great convulsive shivers ran through his rigid body. As his master stroked him he tried to get up, but couldn't. A great spasm shook him. The other dog turned its head away, whimpering.

Marcel Ourdinneau gave the old man a coin and passed on. He felt suddenly uncomfortable, weighed down by a vague foreboding. He hated the sight of misery, of old age, and of sickness. The sight he had just seen had taken all his happiness away. He longed to forget it in his wife's welcome. She would be waiting for him, he would kiss her forehead, as always, and gradually his lips would descend to hers. At the thought he threw his cigar away, took a peppermint out of a package in his pocket, jumped into a taxi and hurried home.

"Madame is in?"

"No, Monsieur. But Monsieur Vincelon is here," the maid added. "Before she went out Madame gave orders to have the table set in her boudoir."

"What an idea! Why not in the dining room?"

"And she asked me to light a fire. She said it would be cosier."

"Where is she?"

"When she went out she said she was going to the dentist and to the dressmaker."

A soft light filtered out through the yellow chiffon lampshade in the boudoir. Madame Ourdinneau's perfume, which somehow permeated the room, seemed less appealing than usual to her husband. He felt offended because Vincelon had breathed it first. A soft blue wrapper had been forgotten on a chair. Ourdinneau rolled it into a ball and tossed it in a corner as he turned to Vincelon.

"You're already there, eh?"

Vincelon jumped to his feet like a soldier taken to task. Whenever anyone spoke to him gruffly he seemed to get doubly timid.

"Ye-es . . . I . . . your wife was kind enough to . . . telephone," he stammered. He felt awkward at having been caught sitting there, dreaming. He was sorry he hadn't brought a book along.

"She . . . asked me to . . . dine with you."

"So I hear."

"Am I in your way?"

"Not at all. But why aren't you with your best girl?"

"I haven't any. I don't know how to talk to women. . . . I . . . I . . . don't seem to make any impression on them. If I meet a girl at a dance and devote the whole evening to her she doesn't recognise me when she meets me in the street the next day. Just doesn't remember me. I don't mean anything to anybody. Your wife's the only person who calls me by my first name. You don't know what it means to have a woman call you by your first name. Your wife's very kind to me. But I'm afraid I come too often."

"Not at all. We're glad to have you. But sometimes a man doesn't feel like talking, that's all. Take a book. I'll take the evening paper. No, don't sit down there.

That's my wife's chair. Why do you stand up like that? Can't you take another chair?"

At eight o'clock, Ourdinneau, exasperated, threw his paper to the floor.

"Is anything the matter?" Vincelon suggested nervously.

"It must be her wrist watch. It's always losing time. I've told her again and again to get another."

The maid knocked and asked through the half-open door— "Madame is not home, yet?"

"Don't you see she isn't? Why don't you telephone the dentist? Ask if he was very busy and kept her waiting a long time."

"I wouldn't worry if I were you," Vincelon remarked.

A few minutes later the maid returned.

"The dentist says he saw Madame this afternoon."

"Did you telephone the dressmaker?"

"The place closes at six."

"Wasn't that the bell?"

"It was the bell downstairs. Shall I serve dinner?"

"No. We'll wait."

The maid shut the door.

"I can't understand it," Ourdinneau muttered. "She's always home when I come back from the office."

"Perhaps she took the subway. Once I was stuck in it for more than three hours. There was an accident or something."

"When was that?"

"Three years ago."

Ourdinneau shrugged his shoulders irritably, opened the French windows and stepped out on the balcony. In this way he would see his wife arrive. He was furious at being obliged to share his anxiety with a stranger.

"You'll catch cold out there," Vincelon said.

Ourdinneau pretended not to hear. It began to rain. The street seemed dark and full of desolation. Now and then a wagon or a car passed. Where could his wife be? Suddenly it seemed to him that a woman is such a tiny thing in space . . . no matter how much she may mean to a man. He felt as if her dear body were lost in the night, in the rain.

"I'm sure there's been a block on the subway," Vincelon remarked, coming out to Ourdinneau. "Or perhaps she went to a *thé-dansant*. With Madame Pleige. Madame Pleige is mad about dancing. Lucienne didn't dare say no, probably. Why don't you telephone Pleige? He might know something."

The bell rang.

"There she is," cried Vincelon.

Ourdinneau rushed out, pushed the maid aside and opened the door, stepping back, chilled, at the sight of an elderly gentleman dressed in black.

"*Monsieur?*"

"I would like to speak to Monsieur Marcel Ourdinneau."

"I am not at home to visitors."

"I am the police commissary."

"My wife? Has anything happened to my wife?"

"Could I speak to you a moment alone, Sir?"

Ourdinneau showed him into the library.

"My wife?"

"A frightful accident."

"Dead?"

"Try to take it calmly. . . ."

The husband turned away, clutched the wall, and then leaning against it buried his face in his hands, groaning.

"Dead!"

"Monsieur, my mission is very difficult. Please try to listen."

"One moment." Ourdinneau tried to catch his breath, master his nerves. After closing his eyes and setting his lips he said, "Go ahead."

"You know the Pleiges?"

"Yes."

"They are friends of yours?"

"Yes."

"Monsieur, it is very hard to say what I have to say. Madame Pleige received an anonymous letter informing her that this afternoon her husband was. . . ."

"My wife?"

"Yes."

"It's not true!"

"When her husband opened the door she pushed him to one side, pulled a revolver out of her bag and. . . ."

Ourdinneau had turned deathly pale. Large drops of perspiration oozed out on his forehead, but he tried to stand straight and weather the blows. He heard as in a dream. "Morgue . . . identification . . . perhaps you can come at once. . . ." With clasped hands he seemed to clutch his breast as if to compress the horrible wound that had been opened in him and out of which his very life-blood seemed to pour and for a moment it looked as if he would fall. Then he straightened up. Punished! The adulteress had met the fate she deserved! He felt no pity for her. In this world one has to pay for everything. *He* had showered gifts on Lucienne. Her lover had brought her death. That was what she deserved. He said, "Monsieur, had I been in Madame Pleige's place I would have done the same thing."

The police commissary lifted his hand as if to impose silence in the presence of the dead.

"I'm ready," said Ourdinneau.

As he was going down the stairs the maid called, "Monsieur, is anything the matter? Monsieur!"

He didn't answer.

The maid went back to the boudoir where Vincelon was walking up and down nervously.

"What is it, Eugenie?"

"Monsieur went away with the commissary."

"An accident?"

The maid shrugged her shoulders. "Madame is probably hurt."

"An automobile smash up, probably."

The maid shook her head. "No. A love affair."

"How dare you!" Vincelon burst out.

"Monsieur, I say so because Madame did not go to the dentist today. I said so to shield her. Madame was not happy."

"How can you say such a thing?"

"Oh, you know as well as I. Sometimes when I would be dressing Madame, I would say, 'Ah, how beautiful Madame is!' and she would sigh and say, 'Poor girl, if you

knew how little I care. . . .' and she would look at herself in the glass, poor dear, at her jewels and her furs, and make a gesture as if she wanted to tear off all her finery and run away. Sometimes when I helped her on with her sable coat she would seem to sink down as if she couldn't bear it, although the sable was as light as a feather. And one day when Monsieur brought her a diadem, Madame looked like a queen—like a queen married to a king who beat her. . . ."

"Oh!"

"No, Monsieur didn't beat her. Perhaps it would have been better if he had. I mean sometimes husband and wife fight, he beats her, she scratches his face and then they forget about it afterwards. But Monsieur doesn't mean to be brutal . . . but he doesn't understand. He. . . I can't find the word . . . he persecutes—he persecuted Madame. Sometimes I used to think, 'She'll end by running away or killing herself.' She'd wake up in the morning, so sad. It used to break my heart. Such a lovely woman! I'd ask her what she wanted to eat. 'Anything you like, Eugenie,' she would say, 'I have no appetite.' How she hated the big dining room, especially when she and Monsieur were alone! She did not like her bedroom, either. Once when Monsieur was out traveling she slept in her boudoir, on the couch you're sitting on. She was as happy as a school girl on a holiday. She sang! She liked Monsieur Vincelon very much, she was always glad to see him. And the Pleiges too. I often heard her laugh when she was with them. Otherwise she hardly ever laughed."

"And when she went out today?"

"She seemed happy. She said, 'Fix up a nice dinner for Monsieur Vincelon.' She had a new dress on and one of her prettiest hats."

"If she's badly hurt you'll take good care of her, won't you, Eugenie?"

"Ah, I'd give everything I have in the bank to spare Madame! Monsieur wants to wait? Let me bring a cup of bouillon."

Vincelon did not have the strength to get up and go.

He had to wait. Wait to hear what had happened. He went to the corner where Ourdinneau had thrown the wrapper and picked up the soft silk and kissed it, kissed it like he had kissed Lucienne's hand, one evening. She had not objected. The next day she had given him a little silver box, it had a cover in relief. The design bore the romantic title "Friendship." What a chasm there is between friendship and love! Vincelon had never bridged it. When he was near Lucienne he was neither brain nor flesh, but heart. He surrounded her with a loving tenderness which she scarcely noticed, but for which she was grateful just the same. One evening, in the country, when he had laid a shawl over her shoulders, she had remarked, an hour afterwards, "Roger, how kind of you to bring me a shawl! I didn't notice it, but I felt so comfortable and warm." A reward, after all, the words, "I didn't notice it, but I felt so comfortable and warm!"

"Monsieur," said the maid, "Monsieur Ourdinneau is back."

Vincelon heard Ourdinneau's voice, "What? Vincelon still there? I'd forgotten him."

Ourdinneau came in looking as if nothing had happened.

"Marcel! What has happened?"

"Yes, you want to know, I suppose. Eugenie probably wants to know, too. All right. But it's not a very beautiful story."

"Lucienne?"

"Killed by Madame Pleige."

"I don't understand. . . ."

"Madame Pleige was jealous of Lucienne and killed her. What more do you want to know?"

"She's . . . dead?"

The maid sobbed out loud.

"Stop your sniffling," Ourdinneau turned to her. "I suppose you knew all about it?"

"Ah no, Monsieur! No!"

"What's the matter with you, anyway, Eugenie, doubled up in that chair?"

"I had to sit down, Monsieur, it was such a shock, but I beg pardon, Monsieur, for having sat down."

"You'd better get moving. And I want to say just this—No tears around here. Quick now, I want to dine."

"Monsieur wants to eat?"

"In the dining room. Do you want to stay, Roger?"

"I don't like to leave you."

"Lively there, Eugenie. I want everything as if nothing had happened."

"As if nothing had happened?" Vincelon's voice was quivering.

"Am I to blame? Ought I to be sorry? What do you think I am, a saint or a jellyfish? Do you want to know how I feel? Relieved. Yes. Relieved. I'll leave the sympathy to others. Justice has been done. And well done. I tell you, I'm a man's man!"

II

"Take a cigar, Vincelon? No? One would think you were the husband! You didn't eat, you won't smoke! Poor little dearie. Thank God my parents made a man out of *me*. Pity, eh? Fine for weaklings, clams. Think me a brute, eh? Let me tell you. When I was walking home from the office today, I saw a little dog, pulling a cart, fall down and die. I almost cried and I'm not ashamed to say so. It hurt me beyond words to see the beast suffer. It had never harmed anyone and it slaved till the last. There's something in that, let me tell you. That's work. That means something. But these restless, idle women! Pfoui! They're the curse of the world."

"What about the man?"

"Pleige, you mean? He got away, unharmed. He tried to interfere, but Therése, that is, Madame Pleige, cried, 'You keep out of this. I want to settle with her!' A woman doesn't shoot down a man she's pampered and fed for fifteen years. Yes, they'd been married fifteen years. And such a man! The man who said women were fools was right. How anyone could choose Pleige for a husband! Such a nose! And legs like a rainbow. No chest. Weak. Lucienne was weak, too. And he strutted about like a Don Juan! Why don't you laugh? Don't you think it's

funny? A man no higher than my boots, with decayed teeth? And dull! Could talk of nothing but music, art, poetry, travel . . . and he played the piano . . . raved about the nights of Venice, the moonlight. . . . Lucienne used to disapprove when I fell asleep while he talked. Of course I like to hear about art when an artist talks about it, but what was Pleige? An effeminate fool—an engineer he was, never had a job in his life! Called himself a poet. Wrote verses for her, I suppose, sentimental trash and nonsense. What chance did I have? I only know how to talk about business. And Lucienne soared away above such prosaic things. When I used the word 'customer' or 'dress goods' she'd put on that pained expression which women get when they feel superior. Superior, ha! I never told you, eh, where I found my ethereal angel, my dream of innocence?"

"Marcel, stop!"

"You don't like the truth, eh? But I want you to hear it. No one would have guessed it. It was a well kept secret. When I met her she was working in a bogus law office. The man who kept it went to jail, afterwards. Every afternoon she'd have tea served to her in the office—as if anyone who worked would drink tea, in the afternoon! You don't see me letting my stenographer have tea, do you? I met her on the Boulevard one day. I was going to the printer. She was in a hurry and happened to bump into me. We both apologized. And started talking. At that time I was courting a girl who had no brains at all. Lucienne was so different. I felt I had to see her again. I made her make an appointment. We met again, went for sentimental walks. I lost my sleep, my appetite. She used to talk of her sainted father and her worthy mother. Her mother! A faded old blondine. I forgot all about the other girl. A nice girl she was, too. But I was crazy about Lucienne, with her pale face, her purple eyelids, her sweet, angelic sort of martyrized expression. Lucienne always was a martyr. After I married her it was the same. It seemed to be her business to look like a martyr.

"Before I married her I said to her one day, 'Lucienne, if you love me we'll get married the day you say. But if

you don't love me, send me away, now. And just so you won't want to marry me for my money I'll make a settlement on you if you turn me down.' Rather clever, that, eh? She said she loved me and I believed her."

"Of course she loved you."

"She did, did she? She was so glad to get out of her tenement that she thought she was in love. To get out of the slums into one of the finest apartments in Paris, to find compensation for all the years of misery and humiliation, I tell you that's a good deal. But after a week or so you get used to luxury. You feel it's something you're entitled to. And after he's given her all his treasures Prince Charming is nothing but a vulgar dry goods merchant. Should he be thanked for his gifts? Didn't he get everything he wanted? It's a fine thing, this modern marriage,—'Just so you won't have a headache when I want to kiss you, here's a pearl necklace or a sable coat.' Or, 'To make you smile when I ask you to stay home instead of going to the party, here's a bracelet or a ring.' I lived in a sort of starry dream. Thankful for the least crumb of affection. When I came home from the office and found her a little sad, a little absent-minded, but letting me seek happiness on her cold lips, I was satisfied. Cold for me, eh, but ardent for others. But I never suspected anything. A man who doesn't understand women thinks that bored, listless consent is love."

"Really, Marcel. I can't bear it!"

"Can't bear it! Poor little darling! But you've got to, just the same. Because I want you to know all about the Madame Ourdinneau that was. Otherwise you'll go around calling her a victim, and say you realize she had to seek sympathy and understanding. What a fool I was! And to think I brought it about myself. In the beginning she didn't like the Pleiges at all. They were my friends. I had to insist on her seeing them."

"You mean to say that . . ."

"Yes, I mean to say I let the wolf in. I made her go out with the Pleiges. At last we became bosom friends, the four of us. We always went out together. No one saw the Pleiges without the Ourdinneaus or the Ourdinneaus

without the Pleiges. When she was out Lucienne was like another woman, laughing, joking, smiling. One morning, at the end of a gay supper party, she lifted her glass. 'Let's call each other by our first names,' she said. And off we went. Chin-chin, Therèse, chin-chin, Lucienne, chin-chin Marcel, chin-chin Georges! We were full of champagne and friendship. Therèse, Madame Pleige, I mean, was the least enthusiastic. She followed at a distance, so to speak, and every now and then she'd look darkly at her husband and at Lucienne. You've seen her, haven't you? A skinny little thing, her arms like grasshoppers' legs and her oily black hair done into a heavy knot. By God, I congratulate that woman! If I had my way I'd free her at once! And if I can help her you watch me! I'll tell my story to the jury. I'll make Lucienne suffer. I'll . . ."

"Marcel! You're out of your mind! I understand you feel badly, but . . ."

"You understand, eh? But think I should keep my mouth shut? I'm the guilty one, I suppose? That's what you mean, is it? Well, you're right at that, old boy, when a man's a fool like I was. . . . But what the devil was the matter with me? Where were my eyes, my brains? One night in Switzerland we were out on the lake. There was a big fête. The sky was like a dark blue vault, shot with moonlight and there were Venetian lanterns floating on the water. I tried to kiss her. 'Don't,' she said, 'the night's too beautiful!' And I never suspected anything! As if anything could be more beautiful than to kiss a person you love on a night like that! But of course one never has sense enough to analyze things coldly. I should have sent her back to her law office. But I was absolutely gone. And all the time I never even looked at another woman. And Heaven knows I meet enough of them in my business. I remember one day a lady said to me, 'Ourdinneau,' she said, 'you're a fool.' I suppose she knew something. Of course everybody knew. Except me. And clever she was, Lucienne. Said her dressmaker lived in the street where she used to meet him. An alibi, of course. Hussy!"

"Marcel! When she's lying there, in the Morgue. . . ." Vincelon stammered.

Ourdinneau paused a moment, looked at Vincelon, his chin set brutally. "You loved her, too, I suppose."

"I despise you!" Vincelon was trembling like a leaf in the wind. "You've been avenged, by another person. Can't you keep still, now? Haven't you got a spark of decency?"

"And what if I haven't? I know how to hate because I know how to love. And as for you. . . . The sight of you has pained me for a long time. Get out of here. . . ."

And as Vincelon, pale as death, tried to steady himself by holding on to a chair, Ourdinneau opened the door and pushing him out shouted, "Get out at once, damn you, or I'll have the maid sweep you downstairs."

III

Ourdinneau was kept very busy for several months. The trial lasted a long time and he was frequently called to the witness stand. His testimony brought about the acquittal of Madame Pleige. When the verdict of "Not Guilty" was read, he rose and saluted Madame Pleige obsequiously. The women in the courtroom were shocked, but the men approved his attitude. Afterwards he sold his business. A scandal ruins a reputable firm. He had to get out. He put his money into bonds. He was surprised when Lucienne's mother refused to accept anything from him. He had offered her a meagre sum simply to avoid having people say that he let her starve to death. But the old "blondine" preferred poverty to accepting a penny from him. He tore her letter up, just as he had torn up everything belonging to Lucienne. He closed the apartment and set about to find oblivion. He took a room in one of the largest hotels, in the noisiest part of the city. He slept as well as one can sleep in the midst of jazz bands and dance teas. He changed his name, and changed his face by growing a beard. He had new initials embroidered on his underclothes and new cards engraved. He planned his new existence carefully, determined to live as wisely as possible in order to live long. He wanted to savor his triumph over Lucienne as long as possible. She had been killed at

twenty-seven. He was still alive and in the best of health. That in itself was a daily revenge.

He did not care to go out, or to read. He liked to sit and think of all the reasons for despising and forgetting Lucienne. She had not been his wife. A real wife is a woman like Madame Pleige who commits murder to keep her husband. Lucienne had been nothing but a passerby, a passerby who disappears in a storm. He thought it was about time to replace her. Living alone, as he did, was like being in mourning for her! Ridiculous! He put on his dinner jacket and went for dinner in a gay cabaret. A rather agreeable young thing smiled at him. But he heard her say to the waiter, "Auguste, do you know a cure for corns? My feet ache something awful." He felt disgusted and left the place as lonesome as he had entered it. He went into one of the music halls where girls abound. But none of them appealed to him. One might have a beautiful figure but her mouth would be coarse. Another had hands like a trooper. He shuddered at the thought of talking to them. He ended up in a dance hall. The head waiter gave him a table. He sat alone with his champagne, watching the other guests throwing celluloid balls about and shaking rattles. No one paid any attention to him. He felt like a fool sitting there like a statue. He went out, disgusted with himself, and took a taxi back to the hotel. As he was walking down the empty hall to his room he met a lady whom he threw his arms about and said playfully, "I've got you now!" and dragged off to his room.

The lady laughed and giggled. She took off her veil and Ourdinneau saw she had a big moustache and terrible black eyebrows. She was a foreigner, her name was Houflwick or Zoumwhistle, or something like that. She was immensely excited at being kissed in the corridor by a Frenchman! She had just come back from supper herself and, having lost her key, she was looking for the maid, when he caught her. "Ah, Paris, Paris!" she cried, in ecstacy, and laughed and giggled.

Ourdinneau felt suddenly frozen. He rang for the porter.

"This lady has lost the key to her room. Please open the door for her," he said.

And as he went to bed he said to himself, "I certainly am a damned fool. Everything I do is idiotic."

The next day he went to *thé-dansant*. As he was about to sit down at a table he noticed a rather young girl passing by. She smiled vaguely at him.

"Will you come for a drive with me?" he said.

"I'm waiting for a friend," she said.

"Never mind."

She seemed to hesitate. The hall was stuffy and the air was heavy with stale tobacco smoke. "If you'll take me for a drive in an open car, in the green," she said, "I'll go with you. The weather is so lovely today, it's a shame to stay indoors."

She was dressed like a girl of the middle class. Her accent was like that of a rather educated lady's maid. She had little diamond earrings, and around her neek a slender gold chain. She was dark, vivacious, her eyes were full of life and yet withal she was rather timid.

"I have to be back at seven," she said.

"Don't try that on me," said Ourdinneau rather roughly as he hailed an open taxi and told the chauffeur to drive through the park.

Ourdinneau felt suddenly disgusted. He was sorry he had invited her. But almost as if she felt his change of feeling she slipped her hand gently into his. The charm of the innocent gesture appealed to him. They dined at the hotel, in Ourdinneau's room. With her hat off, and her hair fluffed up, he rather liked her.

"My name is Simone Pilatz," she said. "What is yours?"

"Marcel."

"And nothing else?" She flushed. "If you had met me in some other way you would have given me your name."

"You are quite right. Marcel Alban."

She felt he didn't think much of her and she began to cry. She didn't want to cry, and exclaimed, "What's the matter with me today? You must think I'm an awful fool. But if you could read what's going on in me, Mr. Alban, you would be flattered."

To change the subject, he suggested, "You must have seen many strange things in your life."

"I don't know."

"I suppose it isn't always ideal, eh?"

She thought it rather tactless of him to insist like that, especially since she had taken such pains to behave like a lady.

"No, not always," she said.

The ideal, she thought, would be to have a friend like Ourdinneau. She had always wanted to be loved by a man of his type, tall, handsome, determined. He didn't know what she was thinking, but he saw she was moved. She kept repeating to herself, "If he only had met me in some other way. But if he had he wouldn't have asked me out for a ride." When at the dessert he tried to kiss her, she said, "Won't you let us become friends, first?"

"I know you don't think much of me," she continued, "but I'm better than you think I am. I had a little notion shop, in Tours. One of my sisters is in Paris, she's a big milliner, Marie Pilatz, perhaps you've heard of her. We fell out. You see I was married and my husband didn't want me to see her. He didn't like her. She hadn't made good in her trade yet. When my husband died and I had to give up the shop in Tours I asked my sister to let me work with her, but she said no. Her turn not to know me, she said. And I felt so frightened, in Paris, honest, I didn't know what to do."

"I've heard of your sister," Ourdinneau said.

"She's much more clever than I am," she said. "I'm a homebody. That's all. And I feel so lonely in Paris."

"I'm alone, too."

"Excuse me, I don't mean to be personal, but I thought you were married."

Again he changed the conversation.

"When you had your shop in Tours where did you buy your supplies?" he asked.

She told him and they started talking shop. Suddenly she rose, took her hat and looked for her umbrella.

"Are you going so soon?" Ourdinneau asked. "Have I offended you?"

She felt it would be useless to try to explain. When a man has picked up a woman the way he picked her up he

doesn't believe what she says anyway. But in talking of the past she had suddenly been torn out of the lethargy she had been living in.

"Please let me go," she said.

"If I only could make up with my sister, I could get a good job with her."

"In the meantime, how about taking a trip down South with me? Taking a look at the Riviera?"

"The Riviera?"

She clapped her hands in ecstacy.

"Oh, Marcel!"

Ourdinneau understood what Vincelon had said. There's an incomparable sweetness in having a woman call you by your first name. It's the one caress those who live alone never experience.

"How good you are! How could anyone help loving you!"

IV

She loved him humbly, which was her way of loving. She had asked him to think of the days spent in preparing for the trip as engagement days. He wanted to take her to a little place near Toulon where he had spent a week with Lucienne. This would be the climax of his vengeance. Simone thought he had very extravagant ways. She knew a little restaurant in the Faubourg Montmartre, she said, where they could get a very good dinner for six francs. And she didn't want expensive clothes, just one plain little dress. "Because you picked me up you mustn't think I'm out for your money," she said. She suddenly longed for respectability, she wanted to be thought of as a respectable woman. And she was grateful because Ourdinneau did not try to break the agreement about the engagement days, but maintained an attitude of devoted friendship only. She was glad that he seemed fond of her. The second day, when he said good-bye to her, she exclaimed, "Poor boy!" Ourdinneau started. Lucienne had said the same thing to him one of the first nights after they were engaged, a night he had seemed unable to tear himself away from her. And

Lucienne, too, had placed the palm of her hand on his lips. The same gestures, the same words. But the result would be different this time. In this new companion he had found the type of woman suited to him, a sort of servant-companion.

Love, even desire, creates a new state of mind in a man. Ourdinneau did not recognize himself. He was tender, submissive. The engagement days were delightful. "What a pity," Simone sighed, "that they have to end!"

He made the most wonderful promises. They would have a wonderful time in the South and would come back more than ever in love with each other. "When you go back to work," she said, "I'll take care of the house." When she heard he had enough money to live on she jumped with delight. "How lovely! We'll never part!"

They traveled down to the Riviera, his arm resting about her waist, and no one was scandalised, because she looked like a demure bride. And they arrived at a dazzling, luminous sea, under clouds blazing red and gold.

"What sea is that?" Simone asked. "And what sky? It can't be the same sky as in other places!"

The landlord came out to greet them. Ourdinneau asked for the large room with a balcony.

"It seems to me Monsieur was here before," said the proprietor.

"A long time ago."

"And where are the laurels you said would be in flower?" Simone asked.

"It's a little too late for them," the landlord apologised.

Ourdinneau pulled her arm. "Don't waste time talking to him. I'm tired."

He was not tired. But he wanted to see the room where he had spent a week with Lucienne. The same impatience caught him now that had frightened his wife. Simone would know better than to be frightened. As soon as they were alone he put his arms around her. And he read in her eyes the same submissive worry he used to read in Lucienne's.

"I suppose the baggage will be coming," she said. "Let's go out and look at the sea."

What did he care about the sea? He hadn't come to look at the sea. He had come to kill the tender, tragic ghost that still haunted him.

He put his arm around her again and drew her to him.

She escaped, running to the window. "How beautiful it is!"

He suppressed an oath. Almost the same words as Lucienne, that night in Switzerland.

He went over and shut the shutters.

"Oh!" she gasped. "What will people think!"

Again Lucienne's words.

"If you don't like me we can make some other arrangement," he said curtly.

"If you don't like me!" she repeated. "Of course I like you. I love you. But don't you understand? Woman is such a strange creature. It's so hard to explain. I like to just close my eyes, and be held close, and be comforted . . . I can't help it, when I'm happy I'm so afraid my happiness will vanish if I seize it too quickly . . . when a woman loves, she longs for gentleness, tenderness . . ."

He caught her in his arms as if he would break her. A cry escaped her. He felt her inert like a bird that has been caught and that after having tried to fly away lies limp in order to gather strength for a new attempt to escape. He kissed her lips savagely. She threw her head back and looked, through the cracks in the shutters, at the flaming sky of which he was so jealous.

V

He was waiting for her to come down and was smoking a cigarette on the veranda, in the same place where he had waited for Lucienne five years before. He thought of his wife. It's easy to forget, after all. Any woman can take any other woman's place.

Growing impatient, he went upstairs. Simone had fallen asleep again. She woke with a start as he came in. He went and opened the shutters. The sky was overcast.

"What a pity!" she exclaimed. "I thought the sun always shone down here."

"Do you love me?"

"Yes."

"Then what does the weather matter?"

Simone looked at him as if she were frightened. "How long do you want to stay here?"

"Why? Don't you like it?"

"Of course."

"Don't you love me?"

"Yes."

"Then what's the matter with you? You seem to be regretting something."

"I?" She laughed a little shrilly. "How silly."

He would have thought her quite crazy, she felt, if she had confessed that she regretted the days in Paris when he had been tender and yet distant, like a *fiancé*. Yes, she regretted the "engagement days" when she had been free and could do as she liked. Now he ordered and she obeyed. It was very warm. She had always hated having people around her when it was warm.

They went for a drive along the coast. He held her arm tightly.

"You'll end by breaking it," she said. "You don't realize how strong you are."

Lucienne's words again! The whole story all over again. The same setting, the same words. He had believed Lucienne hated him. But this girl loved him, he was sure of that. And yet she behaved in exactly the same way. He tried to reason with himself. He understood that in a certain measure she would naturally think of other things than of love. She wanted to see the scenery of course. Well, let her. He took her out in the afternoon. In the evening she suggested dining in the garden. When he tried to hold her hand she told him to be careful. The old lady sitting next to them looked as if she would be shocked. She was very anxious, it seemed, not to shock the old lady.

"What is the matter with you?" Ourdinneau growled.

"What do you mean?"

"Why don't you respond instead of sitting there like a stone?"

She looked worried.

"Why do you make such a face? Have I done anything I shouldn't? Have I said anything I shouldn't?" he questioned.

No, nothing. He had been wonderful. But she admitted it defiantly. She felt grateful to him no longer. She had paid him back. Lucienne had been exactly the same after they were married.

"After all, you're the master," she said. "Don't bother about me."

He ordered more wine and made her drink it. He began to feel that he had lost out. He glanced at her like at an enemy.

"You're not having a good time, are you?" he asked.

"Of course I am."

She replied with the docility of a woman used to agreeing with everything her companion says.

"You needn't say it that way," he retorted. "To whom do you think you're talking?"

"I don't know what I'm saying. The change of air, the scenery, everything sort of goes to my head," she replied.

"I'm sure the dessert will be very poor," he said. "Let's skip it and go upstairs."

"Marcel, if you wanted to be really nice, do you know what you'd do?"

"Take you for a walk, I suppose."

"Yes."

"There's a moving picture house in the town, too," he challenged.

She clapped her hands.

"Let's go!"

"Go upstairs at once!" He banged the table with his fist.

She shrank under his roughness.

"How you talk to me!"

"You don't want to be alone with me, you're trying to avoid me!" he hissed.

"Why, no. How can you imagine such a thing? Of course I love you, but I can't help feeling as I do. I can't change myself. Suppose you were to write me a beautiful love letter. . . . I'd look at it a long time before opening it . . ."

VI

When they came back to Paris he took a handsome furnished apartment in the rue de Berri. His relations to Simone grew more and more bitter. He never left her. As he had nothing to do he spent his time following her around, or shopping. He was like a shadow. His eternal refrain was, "Go straight, or I'll send you back into the gutter."

One day she snapped. "The gutter? Don't be so sure about it. And if I liked it better than the life I lead with you?"

The next minute she was sorry she had spoken. "I didn't mean that," she said. "It just crossed my lips. I swear I didn't mean a word. I must have been crazy to say such a thing. You're so good to me."

"The truth," he ordered.

"I'm just telling you. I love you, Marcel."

"The truth! Fifty thousand francs for you if you tell me the truth."

She had grown used to being treated like a woman of his own class. The mercenary offer exasperated her.

"You drive me to the limit," she cried. "I'll give you the truth, and for nothing! I'll tell you what you are: a brute, a brute. I'm tired of you, I hate you. When you touch me I want to scream. Yes, yes, you've paid . . . you've even respected me. And I know what you're going to say, you're going to ask, as always, 'Haven't I done everything for you?' No, you haven't, if you want to know. The men I met in the street were better than you. They made no pretenses, at any rate. When I did not see them I was left in peace. Don't you know that any woman, I don't care who she is, is something besides an instrument? You're a brute! I bet you were married and that your wife ran away. You'd drive any woman crazy. What's wrong with you? Everything! You've no idea, no, not the slightest, of what a woman feels who's just beginning to love. She's hesitating, modest—yes, you can laugh, I said modest, and have the right to, because I was beginning to love you. Otherwise I wouldn't have cared. You think you're perfect, we know that. But there's something I guess you've never been told

and that is that you don't know how to love. A woman feels like biting and scratching you, and betraying you, yes, betraying you with someone who knows how to be kind, and tender. I'm tired. I'm going. I thought I'd found a tender, devoted man. For two days, before we went South, it was all right. I imagined I'd be in heaven. But if life with you is love, I'd rather . . . I don't know what I'd rather. . . . I'd rather be a washerwoman and at least be free after my work. You don't understand me, do you? Not the lies and the praise you're used to hearing? I loved you, yes, I loved you and now I loathe you. What is it you're looking for now? For your revolver? Help!"

"I'm looking for the fifty thousand francs."

She was shaking. She brushed her hair back from her forehead.

"I don't know what I said. I must have gone mad."

"Here."

He thrust the bills into her hand.

"I hope I haven't hurt you too much," she said. "A woman is nervous sometimes. There's no reason for hating each other even if we can't get on. You really want me to take the fifty thousands francs? Do you think I ought to put them in my sister's business? That would be a pretext for seeing her again. I'm sorry I spoke like that. I don't know why I did. It isn't as bad as that."

"Get out."

"Nerves, I guess."

"I suppose so."

"You say things like that and then you're sorry."

"Good-bye."

"Say you're not angry with me."

"I'm not angry with you."

"You see, down South, I felt like a young girl again. And you know a girl on her wedding night, well . . ."

"Yes, yes. Good-bye."

VI

Some time later Ourdinneau was waiting for Vincelon outside the Ministry of War, where Vincelon worked.

"I wanted to see you. I'm ashamed of myself. I'm sorry."

Vincelon looked at him, surprised.

"What are you doing tonight?" Ourdinneau added.

"Nothing. You've been away?"

"Yes. But what's the use of traveling if you haven't happiness packed up in your trunk? I tried the South, Holland, England, hotel and boarding house life. Now I'm back in the apartment. Come and dine with me. Everything is just as it was . . . that night."

Vincelon steeled himself to see the apartment again. Nothing had been changed, but nothing remained of Lucienne in the atmosphere. It was a bachelor's apartment now. A new maid waited at the table.

"Shall I serve coffee in the *petit salon?*"

The *petit salon* was what used to be Lucienne's boudoir. The maid lit the chandelier and Vincelon did not recognise the room. After the maid went out Ourdinneau put out the chandelier and lit the lamp.

"Roger," said Ourdinneau, "I want to talk of her. I've thought of many things these last six months. I must know. Roger, you're of a finer grain than I, you probably understand many things that escaped me. Was she very . . . unhappy? I don't want any details, and I don't want you to betray her confidence, if she confided in you. Don't answer if you think you ought not to."

"She never said anything to me. She seemed sad sometimes and once in a while I would ask her if anything were the matter. 'There's nothing the matter,' she would answer. 'I'm not worth bothering about. A little nervousness, perhaps.' "

"And what did you think was the matter?"

"She often spoke to me of the time when she was poor, when you and she were engaged. What I thought? I thought that some day she would go as she had come, leaving behind jewels and furs. Her spirit seemed broken. Even when it was very warm she seemed to be cold. Once I asked her if she had any reason to be unhappy. 'I'm sure Marcel is very fond of you,' I said. 'I know he's devoted to me,' she answered. 'There's no one to blame—except

myself.' At that time she did not know Pleige. She once remarked she never laughed any more, but that as a girl she always laughed."

"There was something of the hunted animal about her."

"I thought that perhaps you suffered from incompatibility. But what's the use of talking, Marcel? You're miserable. She loved you, I know that. She must have been led astray in spite of herself."

"Perhaps she loved the man I was . . . before. There's a difference between a husband and a fiancé. She could have left me. But she knew that would have broken my heart. Pleige taught her to compromise. It seems to me now that I persecuted her. I realise it, I understand it. I can't bear it. Pity, yes, I pity her. After people are dead you understand them. She longed for tenderness. The best and the worst women look for tenderness, in love. They don't understand a man's devotion, his affection, unless it's surrounded with the small attentions, the graceful lies with which other men break their hearts. I didn't know what was wrong. Nor did she. We were only two miserable human beings face to face. And those who are miserable and thrown together usually fight. With another man she might have been happy. That night I said Pleige brought her to her doom. No, I did. I, alone. At the morgue that night I felt no pity. On the contrary, I was glad. I felt superior, fool that I was! All the time I imagined that my brutality was strength! If she had had a child to bring up and care for it might have been different. Men forget their misery in their work. That was why, Roger, she spoke of her days of poverty with regret. A woman is made to be one man's helpmate. If she doesn't meet him she suffers humiliation in living with another. I wasn't meant for her. Nor was Pleige. It was because I did not understand her that she listened to Pleige. I wanted to tell you this, Roger, because you loved her."

Silence fell. Vincelon took Ourdinneau's hand and pressed it. He looked at his friend. Marcel had grown thinner and he was no longer so good looking. But in his eyes, formerly so hard and self-satisfied, and so miserable now, there shone a light.

VIII

"The lady did not give her name, sir."

"Tell her to come in.

"Simone has probably spent the money and is looking for more," he thought. But he stood petrified when Madame Pleige walked into the room. She was very fashionably dressed. There was, of course, no reason why she should be in mourning for Lucienne. She was carefully rouged and powdered and smiled vaguely, engagingly. Ourdinneau thought of her as she had looked the last time he saw her, tragic and shrouded in crêpe.

"We're not enemies, are we?" she asked. "I hope not, because I want to ask a favor."

He looked at her. He stared particularly at her right hand, now gloved in white.

"Your wish, Madame?"

"You were so wonderful at the trial. You were a real man. I thought perhaps it would be awkward for you if I showed my admiration there. That's why I bowed so stiffly and I never tried to thank you later on because I thought you might not like to see me. In fact, I'd rather not be here today. But, after all, you're a man's man, you think straight and act straight. We've had one victim. There's been enough punishment. Understand me, Marcel. I realise you cannot like my husband. In your place . . . of course I'm only a woman . . . it's so hard to explain . . . and you don't try to help me. You just stand there looking at me. You see, after the tragedy my husband escaped. He lives abroad and I'm the only one who knows the address. We write each other quite often. I'm not excusing him, but really, I assure you George is not quite normal. His grandmother died insane. I know him. We were married fifteen years. He's like a child. And without him I'm like a body without a soul. We've forgiven each other, by letter. He wants to come back to Paris. But he's afraid, he's not brave, you see . . . he's afraid, afraid of what you might do if you met him. I want to find out how you feel about it. Please understand, Marcel. After fifteen years . . ."

"Live with the gentleman wherever you wish as far as I'm concerned."

"You mean it?"

"Do you want me to put it in writing?"

"How wonderful you are! How I admire you! How beautiful it is for both of us to have forgiven!"

"You mean everything is well that ends well?"

"Why talk of that? It's a painful subject. And it's all over now, anyway."

"No, it isn't. And I want to discuss it."

"I'm sorry, but I really haven't time. I must . . ."

"Send a telegram saying, 'Everything settled, come.' But you see I can't telegraph Lucienne."

"I don't see why you say such things. What's the use of being bitter?"

"All my thoughts are bitter. And I want to know one thing. When you saw the door open and rushed toward them, did she cry, 'Forgive me?' "

"Oh, no. She cried, 'Marcel! Forgive me!' If she'd asked me to forgive her perhaps I wouldn't have fired. Who knows? There's many a slip, that we all know. But, as I said, what's the use of discussing all this? You've said again and again that if you had been in my place you'd have done the same thing. Don't try to be grand about it now. You know you were glad to have someone avenge you without risk on your part. Why do you stand there looking at me? You're not a judge! You didn't see them in that room together!"

"What did you do with her letters?"

"I destroyed them."

"What did she say in them?"

"I don't remember."

"That she didn't want to listen to him? I'm sure she did."

"I see, Marcel, that you still have a grudge against George. But I'll stand up for him. She led him on. Nothing else could have induced him to. . . . Why, George was perfectly happy with *me!*"

"Whereas, Lucienne. . . . Is that what you mean?"

"I really must go. Please get out of my way. Don't try to blame everything on George, now. It wouldn't do."

Ourdinneau did not move. He stood as if lost in a dream.

He saw Lucienne's body there in the morgue, the horrible mutilation of her face and hand, of the poor little hand she had lifted, no doubt, to beg for mercy or to protect herself. And then his eye fell on the living hand, gloved in white, resting on the handle of the parasol.

"When a man's the husband of a . . ."

Madame Pleige did not finish. Ourdinneau caught her by the neck and started shaking her as a cat shakes a mouse, while her ridiculous hat bobbed up and down as if it had been pinned to a milliner's dummy, and her hair fell in oily coils over her cheeks. Even the strangulation could not make her painted face change color. Ourdinneau wanted to loosen his grip but his fingers clutched tighter in spite of himself, and with his eyes staring straight into the dilated eyes of the woman, his nails sinking into her flesh, he snarled:

"What do you expect? You said I was a man's man!"

THE YEAR 1937

By CLAUDE FARRERE

(From *Les Œuvres Libres*)

I

IN London at six p.m. sharp, three quakes were felt, but they were very light. They scarcely interested the man in the street. The police did not even have to tell people to move on. Moreover, immediately after, the streets and sidewalks once more became stable. Certainly the cockney was far from dreaming a catastrophe had occurred, when, shortly after eight o'clock, the news, coming from no one knew where, burst forth. . . .

Miss Graham, the only daughter of Sir Christopher—the Channel Tunnel capitalist—was dressing for dinner. After dinner she was to go to Drury Lane, to hear the famous French singer, Sylvabelle. According to gossip, Miss Graham liked France with somewhat more ardor than was to Sir Christopher's taste. While Miss Graham was dressing she noticed, in each of the three panes of her mirror, her own reflection shuddering, as though the glass were cold. In astonishment, she went to the window and opened it. Sir Christopher's house looked out on Berkeley Square. A puff of humid warm air enveloped the young girl; the evening promised to prove heavy, perhaps even stormy. But the old trees standing there seemed not to have started at all, and if the birds perched in their foliage may have opened one eye, they certainly continued to keep their beaks firmly closed. Miss Graham heard and noticed nothing save the deep rumbling of London and the night.

In Paris, things were better, or worse. For one hundred and fifty minutes no one knew or even suspected anything! The shock to the telephone and telegraph had naturally proved considerable and mysterious. From the first

moment Paris was necessarily cut off from London and also from Brussels, Cologne, Copenhagen, New York and from all the northern French towns. But the sky was blue and the day mild; no suspicious sound had been heard anywhere and the barometer remained stationary at 760. As for the soil, it had not even trembled. . . .

Nevertheless, due to a repercussion which cannot satisfactorily be explained by Science, all the wireless telephone receiving stations ceased to receive any message for quite a while. This applies to private as well as public stations, of course. It was at about this time that wireless telephony had become widespread: there were apparatuses in tens of thousands.

While in London, Miss Graham was astonished to find her mirror shaking, Jacques Thorigny, third secretary of the French Embassy to His Britannic Majesty, was reinstalling himself in his old and small diggings on the Quai de Béthune. He had arrived in Paris two days before for a week's stay. He did not complain of the short time granted him, for he liked England—nearly as ardently as Miss Graham liked France, and—who knows?—perhaps for similar reasons.

He, too, was dressing for dinner, expecting to go later to the Variétés Theater to hear the Irish comic, O'Donoghan. He was listening, without paying much attention, to the Reuter evening broadcast which was given out at exactly six o'clock. At precisely that moment the message stopped dead. The identical thing happened to thirty, forty or fifty thousand Parisians in the same second. All of them were surprised. But all save one—Jacques Thorigny—imagined it was anything but an earthquake.

That is exactly what it was. For that night was the night of June 6, 1937.

II

What the earthquake of June 6, 1937[1] actually was, and how all of Europe and, indirectly, the entire world was undeniably upset by it, everybody knows. But

[1] Naturally the date, June 6, is purely hypothetic. The author considers himself quite unworthy of assuming the rôle of a manufacturer of prophecies.

what many people have forgotten is that the violence of the cataclysm was by no means in proportion to its consequences. The term Seism, even, does not occur in this connection. What happened was rather an immense subterranean tidal-wave. The three shocks noted in London were no more than the last quake of three ground-waves, gliding successively under the bark of the earth in the midst of the flames of the central ground-swell. And by great good fortune none of the three waves broke—I mean to say pierced—the solid bark. There was neither cleavage nor fissure. And nothing that looked like an eruption. The phenomenon was limited to a very small region: everything happened in, or rather under an elliptic zone, situated between ESE and WNW, its greater axis measuring about five hundred kilometers, its smaller, two hundred and fifty. But the entire surface of this ellipse rose in one lump and swelled up as milk does when it boils. The third ground wave that came up did not fall back.

The very logical consequence was a heightening of the soil, which occurred over a superficial area of about one hundred thousand square kilometers. The altitudes quoted in older atlases had to be raised fifty meters on an average. And the culminating point of the heightened ground coincided with the eastern center of the ellipse. The new altitude of the latter was one hundred and sixty-five meters above the lowest sea-level. Formerly that same plot was and has continued to be fifty degrees fifteen minutes latitude north by zero degrees ten minutes longitude east from the meridian of Greenwich. Today the Arques and the Somme[1] flow by the foot of the this mole-hill, which has been pompously christened The Mount of the Belle Entente since the new Franco-British frontier runs there.

The first and the most considerable result of the earthquake of 1937 was the disappearance of the old sea called Channel by the British and Manche by the French. Seven-tenths of its area was dried up, all that remains of it is in

[1] This means, of course, the Arques and the Somme both prolonged to the new seaboard. The Somme, under these new circumstances, flows into the Gulf of London, a good thirty miles east of the British capital. The Arques flows into the Gulf of Normandy not far from the former Isle of Wight, its estuary being the same as the new estuary of the Seine. Consult the map.

the west the two gulfs of Normandy and Brittany, separated from each other by the Anglo-Norman peninsula, dominated by the three summits of Jersey, Guernsey and Aurigny. In the east there is nothing of it at all, the new delta of the Somme advances into the North Sea sixty good kilometers beyond what was once the Pas-de-Calais.

The first and the most considerable result. Facts bear no argument; one need only reflect a moment.

No doubt the earthquake of 1937 took a heavy toll of human lives. Thirty towns, among them Portsmouth, Brighton, Le Havre, Dieppe, Dover, Calais, Cherbourg and Canterbury were more or less wiped out. Priceless artistic treasures were destroyed. Even fifteen years later[1] some traces of such a disaster still linger. But these losses were only temporary and their effect was no more than purely local.

On the other hand the entire world literally changed its countenance by the mere fact that on the night of June 6, 1937, England, suddenly and firmly attached to the Continent by an isthmus whose least width everywhere exceeds one hundred and fifty kilometers, ceased to be an island.

What follows is obviously not of general interest. Yet it is none the less *piquant* to state that on June 5, 1937, the desired marriage between Miss Graham, only daughter of Sir Christopher, the Channel Tunnel capitalist, and Jacques Thorigny, the Frenchman, Secretary of Embassy, was by no means an accomplished fact. Indeed the most preliminary steps had not been taken.

Miss Graham—Jane to her friends and parents—was blonde as women used to be in France under Louis XIV, that is to say the color of sunlight and of light gold. Her eyes were two blue sapphires, and her cheeks two petals. As for her character, read Walter Scott; combine Julia Mannering and Diana Vernon: you have Jane Graham absolutely. Jacques Thorigny, for his part, was a Frenchman born in 1912: he had thus learned Latin thanks to Leon Berard and boxing thanks to Criqui. Consequently nothing was more logical than that Miss Graham was crazy about Jacques Thorigny from the moment they shook hands

[1] This story is supposedly written in 1950 or 1955.

and that Jacques Thorigny at the same moment understood that henceforward he loved Miss Graham without remedy or end. They had met at the house of Lady So-and-so, whose God-granted mission in this vale of tears was to pair off for time and eternity such couples of the gentry as were worth bothering to pair off. And certainly the Graham-Thorigny couple was worth the trouble. Jacques Thorigny belonged to the best republican nobility of France, but was none the less a real gentleman. The Career hoped much of him: a carefully-selected Mme. Thorigny could not fail to be Ambassadress very early in life. Miss Graham moreover was not content with being the daughter of Sir Christopher, the Channel Tunnel capitalist; she was also and in the first place the last offspring of that great line of Grahams which has given England such countless heroes.

Lady So-and-so, who knew life, and who was a good woman, prophesied great days for the Entente Cordiale before ten years passed: a Graham would undoubtedly return to London some day on the arm of a Thorigny promoted Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary.

But that was not Sir Christopher's opinion. And Sir Christopher certainly had a say in the matter.

Sir Christopher liked France, of course, just as many, many Englishmen do. But he was chiefly a millionaire; he even expected to multiply his millions by thousands, before long, thanks to the Channel Tunnel. Again this hard-headed business man knew that a French Third Secretary works for glory and that an Embassy ruins its Ambassador if he is not very wealthy indeed. Jacques Thorigny was not worth sixty thousand francs a year . . . and in 1937 francs were paper francs; eighty or a hundred of them to a guinea.

That is why Sir Christopher, a potential multimillionaire had summarily shown Jacques Thorigny the door when Jacques Thorigny had come to ask for Miss Graham's hand in marriage.

Miss Graham was not yet of age. She had not been consulted. When she complained on this score, Sir Christopher treated her with more than firmness. Incidentally, I know many honest fathers who will unreservedly approve

of Sir Christopher's course, especially those who cherish their daughters to the point of idolatry.

Jacques Thorigny, of course, had not lost courage before so small a matter as a paternal refusal. And Miss Graham, cursed up hill and down dale by Sir Christopher, had smiled. Which has no bearing on the fact that on June 6, 1937, while Miss Graham was leaning out of the window above Berkeley Square and while Jacques Thorigny was wondering at the interruption of the six o'clock Reuter broadcast, the Thorigny-Graham marriage was certainly not an accomplished fact. Indeed, even the most preliminary steps had not been taken.

IV

The truth is that the Channel Tunnel—previous to the great European change of June 6, 1937—was at once a most bizarre and opulent undertaking.

It had been discussed since the nineteenth century. The question had been studied, sketches drawn and calculations made. Estimates had been given and profits reckoned. Finally Sir Christopher Graham had made the project his own affair. He had boldly proclaimed that *he* was the man to realise the extravagant dream of a railway connecting London directly with Paris under the Pas-de-Calais, while the latter still existed. From a banker's point of view the tunnel opened up infinite horizons, and from a technical point of view, its construction was child's play. Why, the enterprise would have been successful back in 1860 or 1870! But obviously England would never have tolerated the playing of such a trick.

The *splendid isolation* was still part of the British dogma in 1937. Even the Anglican Church had many far less robust dogmas than that one. Sir Christopher Graham knew all this better than anyone else, but incidentally it hindered none of his plans. On the contrary, being an Englishman, it pleased him.

Geographic conditions before the cataclysm of June 6, 1937, had tended to make England a privileged nation by virtue of its isolation from Europe, just as Japan was in

Asia; a nation, if I dare express myself in such terms, insured against any hazard of theft, fire or accident, with this sole proviso, namely that it bear the ridiculous expense of a fleet superior to all the other fleets of the universe. Undoubtedly there was something unequal and shocking about this; something immoral, to call a spade a spade. The cataclysm of June 6, 1937, was perhaps—who knows?—the retribution of justice!

Out of the Channel Tunnel, Sir Christopher Graham made one hundred thousand pounds sterling net year in year out whatever business conditions were. Yet as a matter of fact the Channel Tunnel was nothing else than an Utopia. But the peoples of Europe and of the world have never tolerated any discussion of their Utopias. They are willing to pay for each and every one of them until evidence of its impossibility is forthcoming.

On June 7, Jacques Thorigny received an urgent summons to return to London. Even at that date no time was being lost at the Ministries. As usual he took the *de luxe* aeroplane leaving Le Bourget at three and arriving at Croydon at eight minutes past four. He flew over this newly-emerged land, grey and still shining with ill-dried sediment. He was dumbfounded, but he understood nothing whatever about it. It was a true No Man's Land; it seemed endless. Here were whole provinces, which in time could be made to repay practically every damage inflicted by the cataclysm. By glancing out of the windows of the 'plane, Jacques had been able to recognise Abbeville much ruined, Boulogne in tatters, Folkestone in bits and Canterbury, alas! minus its cathedral.

Before grounding, the traveller none the less started up, pivoting round in his armchair to scan the horizon behind him. Where was the sea? It was nowhere to be seen. He had not seen it at all. There was no sea.

By a reflex, the appropriateness of which he did not grasp at once, Jacques Thorigny then remembered flying over a kind of enormous river, half-way between Boulogne and Folkestone. It was so broad that at first sight it looked like a lake. A slow and heavy body of clay-colored water flowed from south to north. At the time, however, he had

not suspected that this river was the Somme—no more, no less—and that overnight it had become a large stream and a favored rival of the Thames. And he was far from imagining that six weeks later the prolongation of this same Somme would be chosen by mutual agreement as just about the natural boundary-line between the new French departments and the new English counties. . . .

At the Embassy a heap of yellow telegrams about thirty centimeters high was waiting for Thorigny. The dinner hour passed without him noticing them: these telegrams brought tidings of too fearful a nature. The French and British cabinets immediately agreed upon the principle of general and international relief for the victims. But this harmony ceased when the question of the division of the regions to be succored into administrative zones came up. The issue of a frontier had already intervened: it promised some hot debates.

"Good Lord!" the unfortunate secretary groaned. "Here is something little calculated to smooth things out for Jane and me. Let's hope we don't go to war. One must never challenge a fool to commit follies; the argument applies even more aptly to mighty, self-governing nations. Charles XII and Richard the Lion-Hearted were philosophers and pacifists compared with the man in the street, whether a Parisian or a Cockney."

Having deciphered the telegrams Jacques did not resist his desire to go and get the latest news, in other words to go to Lady So-and-so's. She was entertaining that evening, and Miss Graham was there as usual. And although nothing in London was more *chic* and virtuous than Lady So-and-so's *soirées,* the cataclysm had caused so much excitement that Jacques Thorigny was able to take Miss Graham aside for three-quarters of an hour without anyone noticing it, not even Sir Christopher.

What they said first on meeting, after a three days' separation that had seemed longer than a month, is nobody's business but theirs, and would be sacrilegious to quote. But when they had finished swearing true and eternal love, they, too, spoke of the cataclysm. And Jacques Thorigny complained again: each of these disastrous events was

surely another new and formidable obstacle between the love of Jane Graham and that of Jacques Thorigny.

"Hm! don't think that!" the girl said. "My father doesn't! And I can tell you as a man of affairs, he very rarely makes a mistake."

"What's that?" Jacques asked, thunderstruck. "What does your father say about it?"

"My father," Miss Graham pointed out, "my father says in his own terms . . . and I beg your pardon for quoting them, darling . . . that the bloody French have certainly made a bargain with Satan over the whole business. Henceforth, he says, an Englishman—and himself, my father, included—will have to be willing to polish the boots of any Frenchman, now that the Channel's abolished. Yes, he said, and that simply because there being no channel, things are now on an equal footing between England and France. He considers this the worst abomination in the world."

"Oh, Jane, dearest," Jacques Thorigny cried, "things will be on an equal footing between us only when you're married to me and in my arms!"

VI

But that did not happen at once.

Here one must bear the events of the year well in mind. 1937 saw the barometer of Franco-British relations execute the most sudden and alarming capers between fine weather and storm. The world's equilibrium, to be sure, had never been solidly reëstablished since the lame peace of 1919. Russia, having returned to its Scythian barbarity, was waiting for its Bolshevism to finish evolving into a new autocracy. Germany, ill-purged of Prussianism, drunk with a stubborn regret of its former hegemony, its Bismark and its Krupp, its pedagogues with their square heads and its corporals with their pointed elbows. Switzerland, Holland, Spain—England, also—too rich in specie and choked by the millstone of too advantageous an exchange, a deadly thing for trade. The Balkans in their eternally volcanic condition. Ireland, Egypt and India, ever unwilling to form three humble colonies. Japan too strong and too proud

to endure forever the injustice of Australia and America, refusing to forget a somewhat shabby conference at Washington in which it had been played a rather perfidious trick. Finally, Belgium, Italy, France, wisely in harness once more for the work of peace, making a worthy effort to climb the hill again, but too deeply in debt, too direly threatened; enunciating to the scandal of Europe, their outlandish claim to recover the debts owed them before repaying their own creditors. A League of Nations figuring above the lot . . . a vaudeville society of which no one can say whether it was more grotesque or more hypocritical and more vainglorious or more impotent.

Such was, in its general aspect, without alteration or prevarication, the political countenance of the planet Earth on June 5, 1937. All in all it had scarcely changed in eighteen years, from the Peace of Versailles to the Cataclysm that abolished the Channel.

But, for the future, things looked threatening and dangerous. The British economic crisis, practically irremediable, frightened public opinion almost everywhere in the United Kingdom. The man in the street—as usual absurd—insisted upon reading the most extravagant correlation between the depression of England's industries, succumbing before a thousand competitors and France's military precautions on the Rhine. No intelligent man anywhere but knew that a Germany once more that of 1914 was as mortally menacing to London as to Paris, if not more so. But intelligent men have little to do with the Government of a democratic and parliamentary nation. The man in the street is very fond of having his own way. That is why war, which in the days of absolute monarchs was a simple and not at all deadly game of chess, has in our day become the horrible scourge which not so long ago clothed all our mothers in black.

London stared at Paris and Paris stared at London like a pair of porcelain dogs across a mantelpiece. Meanwhile in Madrid and Rome the Spanish and Italian premiers—distressed at Franco-British discord, nervous about Prussian ambitions and above all terrified by the thought of a new European conflict—reassured themselves by gazing at the Pyrenees and Alps respectively. But they did not know

at whose door to knock in order to contract a definite insurance against war. They would have paid any price whatsoever for such a policy so long as the insurance agent boasted a sufficiently broad pair of shoulders.

"By Jove!" somebody exclaimed, "a perpetual alliance between France and Great Britain would necessarily establish peace and security in the world for good. And it would also necessarily draw Italy, Spain and Belgium—its neutrality at last guaranteed—in its net."

"Yes," somebody answered, "if the whale and the elephant formed an alliance the world would be theirs. Unfortunately the whale is too much of a maritime animal, the elephant too little. Their language is too different for them ever to agree. So the sharks and the wolves have every advantage to devour this unhappy world."

As a matter of fact, the sharks and the wolves themselves would not come to an understanding. They, too, bewailed their wretched condition. But they wept crocodile tears. And the gudgeons and sheep—Rhenish, Polish or Caucasian—knew what to expect, alas!

VII

From the eighth of June on, the discussion between the plenipotentiaries of His Britannic Majesty and those of our Republic, third by name, threatened to prove ticklish. The Premier of Great Britain was the Duke of St. James. This was his sixth term in office. He was officially assisted by his colleague, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the famous radical leader, Sir David Osborne, and by the First Sea Lord, Admiral of the Fleet, the Marquess of Coronell.[1] A noble group of representatives, to be sure. But in itself it meant nothing. For suddenly something had reared its head behind this trio of glorious and courteous old gentlemen so peacefully seated around the conference table—something immense and irresistible: England herself.

The whole of England, the Government, the Opposition,

[1] The author apologises for having chosen the name of a naval battle in which the British were defeated rather than that of a victory. He did so in order to dispel any supposed allusions. But England was so often victorious by sea that no Englishman can possibly take it amiss.

Parliament, the Press, the "Man in the street," and the King. The whole of England, unanimous and already excited.

"Alarming, don't you think?" grumbled the French Ambassador.

He had been left alone to face the music. The French Premier had not yet arrived. There is no one in Europe more overloaded with mortally absurd burdens than the French Premier. As for Jacques Thorigny, who was at his chief's side, he counted for exactly zero, which was only right.

"Alarming, my friend, don't you think?"

The Ambassador looked at Jacques Thorigny. But since Jacques Thorigny had seen Jane Graham again and since she had breathed a few words of hope, however enigmatic, to him, Jacques Thorigny was determined to be resolute in his optimism.

"I don't think things will go so badly!"

He was thinking of Miss Graham's blond head while he expressed his confidence.

VIII

Years ago, at the beginning of the War of 1914, scores of benevolent prophets agreed that it would not last more than five weeks at the outside. As we all know, it lasted practically five years. Later, at the beginning of the year 1919, the peace of the Woodrow Wilson idealogists proved so little pacific that it dragged the French army from Frankfurt to Barman and from Mainz to Essen. The prophets of yore, far from being discomfited, set themselves once more to prophesying. How long could peace last? What would be its toll of dead, wounded or missing? What would follow—a new and less ambiguous peace or a new and less hypocritical war? This time, however, the prophets were not agreed. Ten thousand solutions were proposed, all of them different. But the most amusing part of the whole business was that every prophet was once again on the wrong track. The ironic gods had so logical a conclusion in store for man that it would have required a Baruch Spinoza to invent it.

The entire day of June eighth had been wasted in chattering over the conference table. The point at issue—the Franco-British frontier—had already been traced beforehand by nature. The plenipotentiaries could scarcely fail to recognise that the Somme, on one hand, had become a large river, its delta stretching from Dunkirk to the estuary of the Thames, and that on the other hand, the Arques, two hundred kilometers longer than before, flowed into the new Gulf of Normandy, twelve miles from what had been the Isle of Wight; furthermore, that, together with these rivers, the Mount of the Belle Entente the most reasonable and equitable of natural frontiers between the North Sea and the Atlantic.

The three Englishmen, however, would have none of it. Incidentally, their specious reason was that the assignment of new land between the contracting parties was not equal. In point of fact, the line of the Arques and the Somme brought a windfall of territory (twenty-five thousand square kilometers) to France, whereas England obtained an area of only fifteen thousand. France was undoubtedly being favored. But any other demarcation would have been very artificial. Such had been the whim of the earthquake. Any cavilling against it only set the fact in a more apparent light.

Discussion was waxing all the more keen because the French Premier had not yet turned up, being detained in Paris by ten thousand obstacles, all equally insuperable. Having only a single ambassador against them, the Duke of Saint James, the Marquess of Coronell and Sir David Osborne were making the most of it. They were hoping some weakness or blunder on the part of their lone adversary might place the Premier of France, when he arrived, face to face with an accomplished fact, whatever its nature. The Ambassador was prudent but old. Jacques Thorigny, whose mouth was too often closed by compulsory deference, observed, not without anxiety, that towards the end of the day, at intervals, little pearly beads of perspiration trickled down the temples of the plenipotentiary, now tired to the point of exhaustion.

But a mysterious aid was at hand. And when, at four

post meridian sharp, the phenomenon occurred, none of the interests of the Republic was really compromised yet.

IX

It began with a muffled sound that skirted the earth like a swallow before a storm, *pianissimo.* The noise grew in volume; it swept like a whirlwind; then it exploded, and its echoes were borne back on the breeze. It became one general cry, a public *crescendo,* a universal chorus of stupor and fright. It was now bursting forth clamorously throughout the capital and the three kingdoms. It fell into the midst of the padded conflict of the Foreign Office like a bomb bursting in a lake filled with great dumb reptiles.

The Prime Minister of England pressed the bell. Two footmen appeared.

"What's the matter?" he first asked in his dryest tone.

"It's at the Stock Exchange, my lord," answered one of the footmen, growing pale. (It was this man who committed suicide a few hours later, having been ruined by the turn of affairs.)

"At the exchange? What do you mean? What are you talking about?"

The other footman (destined to survive the crash), was somewhat calmer. He explained as best he could how Channel Tunnel stock had been slipping ever since the day before, and how, after several appreciable drops, it had collapsed. Other stock had consequently fallen. So far all this was unimportant. But suddenly between two and four o'clock the entire Stock Exchange was seized by panic. The bottom dropped out of the market in the most astounding manner.

"The pound sterling was worth ninety-seven French francs, my lord, at noon today. At three o'clock it still stood at eighty-eight . . ."

"Are you mad, my man?"

"That is not half of it, my lord. A few moments ago it was quoted at eighty-one!"

An enormous silence settled over the green felt of the conference table. For the first time the cries from the street passed over the rampart, the double rampart of

spacious gardens and closed windows. A number, shouted far away, suddenly became audible.

"Seventy-four!"

"Monsieur le président," said the French Ambassador, all at once serene again, looking almost quite rested, "I rather imagine your Grace will agree with me that a present adjournment is requisite. If the pound sterling has fallen in so short a space of time—and to the extent of twenty-three points——"

He had spoken in French for the first time since morning. Mechanically the Premier of England replied in French, and by a question:

"Even supposing so improbable a financial turn has upset the market, your Excellency does not infer——"

"I infer that the cataclysm of the day before yesterday, by doing away with the barrier of water that separated our countries, places them from now on in a genuinely equal relation. The exchange has been affected by it. That is exactly what I do infer from the fact . . . from the fact that is being shouted in the street, shouted so loudly that your Grace cannot but hear it . . ."

And shouted it certainly was. The cry passed once more across the gardens and through the window: "Sixty-nine!"

"Great Scott!" Jacques Thorigny suddenly thought, "Great Scott! Sir Christopher, at this very moment, must be ruined!"

He trembled from head to foot.

"Jane, oh, Jane! Dearest Jane! Mine, mine, mine! At last the greatest obstacle in our path has been broken down!"

Let us do Jacques Thorigny, who was a Frenchman, ambitious and very modern, the justice of realising that he did not for a moment regret the hundred thousand pounds per year to which Miss Graham, the day before, had been sole and legitimate heir. It would have meant two hundred million francs that Jacques Thorigny could have considered as his, as soon as they had become hers, no matter what happened. But Jacques Thorigny loved Jane Graham too much for herself to worry about what she might bring to him along with herself.

X

"I bear the heartfelt and profoundly sincere condolences of the whole of France to your Grace. We fought side by side twenty years ago in the cause of liberty and world peace, *monsieur le président*. Such memories, at once so tragic and so glorious, form a bond that can never be severed. The entire French army mourns for each British sailor who died in this terrible catastrophe. For each of your cruisers that was sunk, our country considers it has lost a regiment.

"Oh, I know very well, *monsieur le président,* that you can object: our nations in the past have always been rivals. Yes, they have been rivals, but loyal rivals. And more recently we became allies—and we remain friends. Believe me, then, when I certify that we share the sorrows of the British people in their present tribulation. Above all believe me when I affirm that England, linked with the continent today, is neither more nor less independent than she was yesterday, though of course her splendid isolation has suddenly become a thing of the past . . ."

Thus spoke the Premier of France, who has at last arrived, to the Premier of Great Britain.

It was only June tenth. But in the last two days, many events had been precipitated.

First of all, the losses of the British Navy had become known. Faithful to the old tradition of British fair play, the Admiralty refused to make a mystery of them. Seven super-dreadnoughts of the latest type had perished in the destruction of Portsmouth; seven super-dreadnoughts, half the naval strength of the kingdom. England, which had ceased to be the leading naval power of the world ever since 1922, after the tragic Washington Conference, would, from now on, cease to be second or even third. The United States, Japan and a reconstituted Russia now threw her back into fourth place. The future looked even blacker. Would not the Mediterranean squadron have to be called back in haste to English waters from Malta and Gibraltar? Did this not at one blow make the Italian fleet, long since rid of French competition, mistress of the Mediterranean, which is the

road to India, to the Far East, to Australia, to New Zealand? Cut off from one-half its dominions, with already so many other interests prevailing against her, Old England ceased forevermore to rule the waves by divine right.

And nothing that went on in Europe could ever be stranger to her again. More especially as in the last twenty-four hours many events had suddenly been precipitated in Europe.

England was not alone in shedding blood as a result of the catastrophe. France, though less severely lacerated, had none the less paid its pound of flesh. "The Franco-British cataclysm." Thus read the great scare headlines of the papers across the Pyrenées, the Alps and, of course, the Rhine. For a moment, the predatory nations that had been beaten down in 1918 by the coalition of peaceful nations, trembled, as hawks and kites tremble when a defenceless partridge flies by. . . .

In proof of which, since June 9, bands of Prussians, too amply provided with machine guns, gas shells and germ throwers, crossed the Rhine surreptitiously north of Cologne. Spreading out over the Rhenish country, they at once marched to Brussels or Antwerp, following huge red, black and white flags that bore as legend the ambitious program: *"Nach Paris, nach London!"*

The two premiers of France and England learned this fact simultaneously.

XI

"Nach Paris! Nach London!"

As a matter of fact, henceforward the second half of the programme was in no particular more difficult to fulfill than the first.

Since the English Channel was non-existent. . . .

XII

The most extraordinary part of it all is that the man in the street in London grasped the situation at once.

The man in the street, the man of the people, the Englishman, was immeasurably less stupid than any Lloyd George

could have possibly believed. He was, moreover—as every intelligent Frenchman had always known—a proud and honest man, no more, no less. In a word: a man.

He was loyal, upright, frank and clean. He loved life, to be sure, and it pleased him to rejoice in his strength and luck. Inclined to profit by his advantages, he was, however, prompt to recognise his defeats. Over and above all this, he never forgot a friend or an enemy.

That man immediately understood that the day of insularity was over and that he must resign himself to live other days. They were different, certainly, but all the same acceptable. Had not every other race been content with that lot since the beginning of history? And was not the English people as good as any other?

Under the windows of the Premier of England the people met and made demonstrations urging an offensive and defensive alliance between the United Kingdom and the Republic.

XIII

It was on June 12, no later, that Sir Christopher, father of Miss Graham, sent a special messenger summoning Jacques Thorigny to his home.

(Jacques Thorigny was still no more than a Third Secretary of the French Embassy. But Sir Christopher had ceased to be the Channel Tunnel capitalist for the very excellent reason that there could no longer be a tunnel under a non-existent Channel.)

"My dear boy," began Sir Christopher, *ex abrupto*, "I am not ruined. But I am considerably poorer than I was a week ago. In spite of this, do you still want to marry my daughter?"

"My dear Sir Christopher," Jacques Thorigny straightway answered, "England is still a very great power. But she has ceased to be the irresistible nation she was just one week ago. In spite of this, France is very happy and very proud to accept her alliance. Could you expect me to do otherwise than my country?"

Jacques and Jane were married. England and France

are united. There is peace between the young couple just as there is peace in Europe. A great peace, a great security, a great future.

Blessed be the cataclysm of June 6, 1937.

THE PRELUDE

By PAUL GERALDY

(Author of *Toi et Moi*)

WHEN Henri saw Helene for the first time, he hardly looked at her. She was just eighteen years old at that time. She wore a pink ribbon around her head and clung to her father's arm. Henri was strangely bewildered by her father, who appeared to him elegant and straight as a young man in stature. Fifteen long years she has now been his wife. Whenever he thinks of her as the young girl she was fifteen years ago, there rises before his eyes this curious picture: A slender, overgrown child, with a haunted face, an awkward headdress, fairy eyes, a ribbon. . . . But then he did not pay any attention to it.

At that time he did not look like the man he is today. He was a timid dreamer in those days. One could hardly guess in this reticent visionary the strange qualities that were to guide his life.

He was a daily guest at the Astier's, where he worked with Maurice, and was less austere and more lively than today. Often he was invited for dinner. During the evening he chatted with the young girl. When she was near him Helene became lively. "My girl has now learned to talk," said Madame Astier.

Everybody felt, in looking at them, that they were destined for each other. Henri understood what they all expected. He had accepted an invitation to spend the summer with the Astiers who treated him like a son. Suddenly one day he vanished.

Madame Astier was greatly surprised.

"That's natural," her husband told her. "Henri knows Helene's value, just as well as we do. But he is far too

intelligent not to let his heart decide. He is young. He has not yet lived. He hesitates about closing his horizon so soon."

"Closing his horizon!" she exclaimed. "What else does he expect from the future if not an intelligent and pretty wife with whom he can found a hearth?"

"What Henri expects from the future is love."

"But that's what I said."

"You said: 'hearth.' "

"Well! that's the same thing!"

"That's exactly it. Henri is not yet sure whether it is the same thing."

"But then he must be a fool."

"No," M. Astier answered. "He is a young man."

II

Thus Henri went away alone that summer, hoping that chance and adventure would compensate him for everything he would lose.

After wandering about in the Alps he stopped in a village where holiday-seekers were mingling their festival spirit with the austerity of the mountains. Gowns shimmering with vivacious colors brought the magic light from outside into the salons and corridors of the hotels.

He began to look for the English girls at tennis. Nonchalantly they approached him, bundling themselves up in their cloaks, sat down near him, fixed their shoes and laughed over the silly things they said to each other.

He left them and went out to the road. He fixed far off objectives for himself, as though he were eager to see more sky and more leaves. But soon the solitude oppressed him. He went ahead more slowly, and turned back to make sure about the return trip. Alone amid the green spaces, he felt a fear creeping upon him. He gave up his plan, returned quickly to his hotel, and was surprised to find it so near.

In the evening he walked through the village and loafed in front of the post office. An Italian woman living in the white villa on the Scaria road sometimes passed him by at

this hour. Whenever he saw her he followed her. Her hair was very black and soft and uncovered her brow, while her nape was hidden under the dark strands. Hardly had he walked past her, when he felt himself humiliated.

He went up into his room and began to read. and then gazed out of the window. Those beautiful evenings sent the wasted days into the limbo of the past, and he found himself face to face with an apotheosis that had no meaning. He looked for a force in himself to face the beauty of the world without any difficulties.

He got up and wandered around his room for a little while. He gazed at his book. He gazed at the table. All seemed to him phantoms, without aim, useless, dead. Night darkled over the landscape. Over Scaria he noticed a lighted window in the lonely villa.

One evening, as he was walking around, he was stopped by a girl who offered him some field flowers.

She was brown-skinned, with dark, deep-set eyes and, in spite of the sombre clothes she wore, there was a suggestion of nudity about her. His interest aroused by the beauty of this careworn face, Henri looked at her. She did not flinch, and thus they remained staring at each other. The young man's eyes expressed his desire and she accepted it without embarrassment. In this way they exchanged daring confidences. But in spite of this frank language, spoken with a hint of supreme intimacy, she remained a stranger, impenetrable, and as if she had come from another race, that astonishing race of women who seem to have about them something related to intelligence and animalism at the same time.

Softly he shook his head as a sign of refusal, with an air of embarrassment and regret. When she had disappeared at the end of the road, he found himself alone, before the dark scenery, which somehow seemed to increase his desire.

Another time, towards tea hour he noticed a young woman on the terrace, whom he had seen there several times before. She passed among the tables with an air of distraction, heedless of the eyes that followed her. She stopped. Henri, who was sitting a few steps away from her, was breathing heavily, tremendously interested in her attitude,

and the way in which he grasped his cup made it appear as though her eyes were fixed upon him. When she left, he suddenly was at his ease again.

As he returned to his room, he noticed her light gown on a road which wound its way through the corn towards the wooded slopes of the Sighighnola. For a long time he followed that lonely wanderer who gradually melted into the distance and the evening. Brusquely he left his room and made for the road. He ran and reached the wood, and saw her gown between the trees. He hastened through the thickets and succeeded in reaching the footpath right near the walker.

"Madame," he said, and all his body was trembling, "is this the road to Lanzo?"

"No, not this one," she said simply.

Her voice had an assurance and her entire personality had an air of authority that was in strange contrast with her graceful demeanour. In great confusion he spoke, looked at her, and then turned his eyes away.

"This is the path that leads to Lanzo," she finally said, pointing in the direction of the village with her umbrella.

She continued her walk and he strolled behind her with halting steps. Without turning around, she said:

"It must be very late."

He went nearer to make a reply, trying to give the impression of a man who was only occupied with gazing at the landscape.

"Do you like this country?" she finally asked with an indifferent tone in her voice.

Urged by a sudden impulse to amaze her, he began to disparage the lakes.

"But I love this quiet scenery," she said.

"I like the countries that exalt me," he replied with a certain violence in his voice. "Everything here is artificial and small. Those villas give one the impression of cardboard houses. Even the peasant houses are decorated like a bunch of shepherdesses at the opera."

He explained that a society which was paralyzed by foreign domination had travestied this country for its own pleasure into a kind of stage where one must pour out

witty sayings, where one displayed golden snuff boxes and light-hearted love affairs, like the Venice of Longhi.

The young woman replied:

"You are thinking of the grottoes of the lake, of the stucco of the Balbienello. But Lombardy is much bigger. Near Varese there are perfect villas."

Gaily he answered:

"Yes, the order of the Latins, calm, measured calm. . . . This sort of happiness frightens me. I prefer the Gothic anguish."

"How old are you?"

"Twenty-six."

"I also am twenty-six. I am much older than you are. Your cathedrals make me weary."

Henry became timid once more. He looked at the young woman's tiny shoe and noticed how it contrasted with his heavy boots on the stony soil. Around them, the high mountains were sleeping in the clear, bluish magic of dusk. Bells began to tinkle.

"Listen," he said. "Those Italian bells. They have a pleasant timbre, although they die out very quickly. They don't melt into the evening. Think of the angelus of France. These have something profane. They are gay."

"You want to spoil my beautiful country?"

"But why? It is charming if the bells are gay."

"You really don't think so."

"Perhaps I do."

"What? Sceptical?"

"No, undecided."

He added, with a sudden rude tone in his voice:

"I would like to know what I like. I would like to be in love with so many things."

He seemed to wait for her to come to his aid and to talk about herself. He thought he guessed a fine irony on the lips of the young woman and to catch himself, he said, with a detached tone:

"For a long time I thought I loved dry wines. Recently, while tasting our old Sauternes in my father's house, I came to understand suddenly that I never liked them. I only thought I did."

"That's true," she said smilingly. "Out of sheer modesty one accepts a foreign taste. And then one keeps it. . . . One loses one's time trying to satisfy somebody."

He showed her a little house with a portico standing off the road.

"That hovel deserves a look. There is an inscription above the door. Well. I am certainly ignorant."

"That's Lombardy slang," she said, half closing her eyes and reading through her eyelids: " 'He who built this house gave it to my grandfather, who had to leave it, because he died. My father succeeded him. From him I got it later on. It must go to my son. Tell me, passerby, whom does the house belong to?' "

"This philosopher is an obstinate tenant," said Henri. "Still, if one profits by something one owns it. As for owning it in the future . . ."

They continued their walk. She went ahead with a light step and its rhythms rang through his whole body. He observed her and felt that splendid possibilities were hidden for him in this woman. But they came near the village. How could he keep this marvellous thing? He would have liked to tell her during the few remaining minutes all about himself and his thoughts, would have liked to talk of his parents, his house, Paris, the Astiers, his work, his wealth, his poverty. Never before had he experienced such a need of revealing himself.

"I have a friend," he began.

But it was already too late. They had arrived. She stopped. He interrupted himself and blushed.

"What were you saying?" she asked.

He seemed to suffer. "Nothing. I beg your pardon. I thank you for listening to my babbling so long."

He anticipated the little greeting on her face, the little light-hearted good-bye, which would take her away from him forever. He bowed and whispered:

"It seems to me that men and women would have many things to say to each other, if they wanted to."

She looked at him.

"You would really like to find out. Good-bye. I am sure you will find out the truth."

She went away so quickly that he had an ache in his heart. Gloomily he returned home.

III

Driven by the desire to see her again, he decided the next morning to wait for her at an early hour. She appeared much earlier than he had hoped, clad in a dark suit that astonished him. He went towards her.

"You are not leaving us, Madame."

"Yes," she said with a smile. "I am leaving for Lugano, where I am living. I came here for a few days only. I am going to see my little boy."

"At Lugano."

"Do you know Lugano?"

"No, Madame."

"The modern part of the city is ugly. But there are the old quarters. . . . And there is even a little church that stands among the hotels, Santa Maria degli Angeli, which you must visit. You will see a virgin of Luini in the first chapel to the right. I go there every morning, before I start shopping."

She held out her delicately gloved hand to him.

"When you go to Lugano, come to see me at the Regina. I shall show you the madonna."

He let four days pass by and then had himself announced at her home. She appeared after letting him wait a long time. He rattled off the words he had prepared to excuse his daring, ashamed as if he had told a lie with that conventional phrase. Then he began to talk slowly.

"Look at the lake today," she said. "Are you always so severe with this country?"

"No. It is a charming country."

"You say this without conviction."

"I don't know much about love," he replied.

He came back, and then multiplied his visits. They spoke about traveling, books, and so sought each other by devious ways.

"I like your spirit," she said.

One day she told him:

"You have something feminine in you that surprises one at first. But one quickly feels your will. It is amusing, this rational romanticism. What fascinates one in you is this mixture of intelligence and fervor, charm and hidden force."

He was silent, as if awaiting his reward. To guard herself in this silence, she hastened to speak and, leading him to the garden, praised Tesserette, Cassarate, and the promenades in the vicinity.

He did not answer her. He was waiting for a deeper note in those words. Her dark eyes were looking into his, as if she wanted to say: "Is that true? Oh, but why?" And his eyes answered with an insistent: "Yes, yes, yes."

"Many people prefer Lake Como," she said.

Sometimes he was near crying out in desperation!

"Listen to me!"

Then he stirred in his chair.

She had put her gold watch on the napkin in order to serve tea, and he dared touch this elegant object which was a part of her. He examined it closely.

"My name is Helene," she said.

"Helene!" he echoed. "Helene. . . . I have a sister whose name is Helene."

"But just now you told me that you were the only child!"

"That's true," he confessed, surprised himself by his lie. "But my friend, Maurice Astier, has a sister. I look on her as my sister."

He drew an enthusiastic picture of his friend.

"But I am only talking about myself," he said. "And you?"

She told him the story of her life. Since her marriage she had lived in London, Vienna, Paris, and twice in Constantinople.

"I have to do some shopping in town. Do you want to come along with me?" she said at last, picking up her gloves, her parasol and her gold watch.

But he took them away from her.

"I would like to look at you. Please let me look at you."

The young woman's eyes flinched as though they were blinded by too much light. She had lost the brilliancy she had just showed. He read in her a feeling of sadness, an anticipated assurance of sympathy which should have given him confidence, as if she had said. "Of course, I am your friend. Tell me all you want to say. . . . I don't have that timid pride which might appear to revolt against it. I like you very much. I know what men want from us."

He lowered his eyes, as if ashamed. Between them the sun's rays were trembling among the shadows of the leaves. He gave her back her watch, her gloves, her parasol and said with low voice:

"Let us go."

She got up and they walked side by side. She spoke. He did not hear. He had a longing to be alone to think of her at leisure. He knew that things were preparing themselves for her and him and that the time was ripe already.

The next day he felt dissatisfied with himself at the idea that he had left her because of his timidity, and he asked her:

"Tomorrow?"

She did not answer.

"I must see you," he said savagely.

"What will people think of me here? You are coming almost every day."

He hesitated.

"Don't you sometimes take walks in the country?" he said. "If I knew where you go, I would meet you."

"What an idea! But why? You must come to see me here, but less often. Come on Saturday, please."

"No!" he said drily and got up.

Her laughter seemed a little forced.

"What a bad character you have! Sit down, then. Shall I meet you outside? Take a walk with you? You know well it is impossible."

He did not seem to hear. He looked at the back of the armchair. . . .

"Don't you ever go to Lanzo again!" he asked.

He came nearer, and with a quivering voice, said: "If you knew how beautiful the mountains are these days."

She did not answer. He guessed that she was waiting for him to say a few words, no, a torrent of burning, persuasive words. But he could not lie. He knew that his only desire justified his demand, a desire that was blazing and delicate and which he did not want to reveal or disguise. She understood this silence and wanted to be frank, too. She raised her head, and her eyes confessed: "Very well, I know it, I am not angry. But please give me time. Do not torture me. All this is so serious. . . . Please go."

He bowed low and kissed her hand.

"I leave you," he mumbled. "Don't say anything. I shall telephone tonight."

IV

Rain fell on the day he was supposed to come. The roads and leaves were gleaming at Lanzo, and the air had the coolness of evening. Henri wandered towards the lake, listening along the road to the dripping of water. The Valsoda stretched out its gloomy curtain in the distance. Albogasio seemed to be asleep. He felt that nothing counted on earth as much as this woman, and that for him, everything depended on her. At last a little bark appeared. An arm was raised and made a sign. . . . It was she! She had come. . . . The bark came nearer. The little prow slashed the water, which was like silk.

The young woman leapt to the sand.

"State qui fin, cher ritorni," she said to the boatman.

Henri thanked her for having come.

"I promised you," she said simply.

Along the road, he spoke a great deal, without knowing if his words masked his indecision or his will. But at Lanzo the couples of the adjacent tables embarrassed them like mirrors that throw back a miniature reflection. He needed more air. And thus he wandered to the woods with the young woman.

Underneath their feet the pine needles had spread a pink and ruddy carpet over the loam. They were alone.

In the silence they heard the cry of an invisible bird which was like the humming of many bees. It came softly towards them. She leaned over. He put his lips upon her closed knowing lips. . . . But she did not give herself entirely in this kiss, in which he touched less her flesh, than the magic of her beauty, her spirit, her life.

He pulled himself back, stunned by this overpowering emotion.

"Ah," he cried. "I would like to. . . ."

He did not finish the sentence, and drew a gesture of utter helplessness with his outstretched hands. He took her arm. They went back to Lanzo.

"What books you have!" she said, when she had gone into his room.

"What do you read?"

She bravely turned to him. He thought, "I want you. I am suffering. Could I dare? What would you think if I dared?"

She remained impassive, and awaited his decision.

He went up to her and stretched his hands out towards her little hat. She took it off herself and lifted her pale face towards Henri with a certain pride, and suddenly her cheeks were flushed. Slowly he closed his arms about her.

He took off her gown, and drank the intimate warmth of her throat and shoulders. She waited without shame and did not hide anything from him any more, as though she said, "I am not a little girl any more. I expected all this. You don't astonish me. You would not want that I appeared to you with an air of astonishment." Did he understand that she detested the hypocrisy of long-winded introductions, that it was precisely her sense of delicacy that she wanted to be taken quickly? "As long as we will attempt to love each other, my friend, I do not want to hold anything back. The important thing is love."

Slowly, with careful and deliberate hand, he undressed her beautiful body and placed it on the bed. All the splendors and secrets of the woman came to light. She remained stretched out. "And now, take my love. . . . Here it is. . . ." And she even closed her eyes, withdrew under her lowered eye-lids, and left him alone before her.

He drew back to look at her with ease. The light fell on the angel who was delivered, on the animal who was surprised. . . .

And still he gazed at her, as she lay before him. He had won his battle and possessed a tremendous booty, but he had no consciousness of his victory. There came from this nudity something grandiose and magnificent which one felt no caress could ever reach, which put to shame all voluptuousness. Henri became more and more timid. But the young woman, too, remained indifferent to her beauty. She was a tremendous mystery incarnate, and all her nature seemed hidden before him, although she herself was not aware of it. There was her divine body, her divine flesh, and her delicate face, which now was so intelligent, futile and human.

"Listen," said Henri, greedy now to touch this thought of having before him her spirit nude as her body. "Did you come to give yourself to me? Did you know that you would give yourself to me?"

"No, no," she said. "I did not know you. I did not know what you would ask of me. I was attracted by you. I have come."

"But," he repeated, "when I told you, 'don't you ever go to Lanzo again,' what did you think?"

She tried to remember.

"I don't know any more."

She added:

"You are astonished, aren't you, to have conquered me so quickly? Say it right out. You must tell me everything. I think it is better so."

He was ready to approve everything, as long as she explained herself. But she remained silent.

"Talk about yourself," he said.

"Oh!" she said wearily.

"I want to know."

Leaning on her elbow, she began to give him the whole story of her life.

"My husband is very good towards me. I thought he loved me. At first we traveled. I followed him gladly. But soon I noticed that those disordered trips were only

a pretext for his laziness, for his love of an easy life. I demanded that he settle down. The first year in Paris I attempted to take an interest in his work. I thought we would understand each other more if I occupied myself with his business. But his business did not really interest him."

She leaned her head against the young man's shoulder.

"I loved music, books, museums. They helped me at first—then they tired me. They made my thirst more intensive. They do not quench. I did not grow tired of them. But I grew tired of myself. One is happy, when one can enrich oneself. But one goes to pieces if one cannot share anything, can never give anything. I had become too ardent."

Henri pressed her against him and then kissed her lips and eyes.

"I thought of God, the churches. I knelt in the corners where the shadow was deepest, at the feet of the largest pillars. I needed cathedrals. I hoped that renunciation would flow from the high naves."

"And then?" he demanded with low voice.

She confessed her defeat.

"I did not feel myself like a little girl," she explained, throwing herself humbly into his arms.

She continued:

"And then the world attracted me."

"Did you want a baby?"

"Oh, yes, at various moments."

For a moment she meditated.

"I did not really want a child. I don't think. . . . We went out. I saw people. Many men made love to me. . . . I did not want a child, you understand."

She added:

"He liked this worldly life."

"And then?" Henri asked, as though afraid for her.

She turned to him, fear in her eyes:

"Everything!" she thought frightened. "Really, it would be good to reveal everything, to feel that nothing is hidden any more." She leaned towards him, lowered her eyes, as if to seek shelter before his gaze, and, weak and guilty,

but safe in his strong arms, where she felt protected, irresponsible and absolved, she delivered her soul to him!

"I was very lonely," she said, "amid so many people. We were living at Constantinople that year. I had tried to have a beautiful home. . . ."

She continued:

"One evening, I was in a little boat on the Bosphorus, with a friend. We heard snatches of conversation drifting from other boats. You know how voices carry on water. I heard my name pronounced. Somebody whom I did not see, said: 'She is the only woman around this place.' Then answering a question: 'Her husband? That's nothing. A name on a door.' After that I did not resist any more."

She added, her voice becoming still graver.

"There was a young man at the Embassy. . . ."

Henri looked down. Again she snuggled up to him.

"He was almost a child. I gave him advice. I helped him. . . ."

"Did you love him?"

"He was a child, I told you."

She continued:

"And then after a year, he was transferred. . . . Oh, that farewell! Suddenly an emptiness and loneliness. . . . Never again to have certain things. . . . The visits, the meetings, the telephone . . . I could not stand it any longer. . . ."

"And then," he asked timidly. "Another one?"

She nodded yes.

"At first I was sick for a very long time. And then. . . . I don't know how it all came about. . . ."

Tears rolled down her cheek.

"He was a big lad, very gay, vivacious, and often made me laugh. They told impossible stories about him. He told me again and again that he loved me. I told him he was crazy."

She told these things with shame, in a confidential tone. He felt a great respect for that frankness. He was grateful for it. He was ready to understand everything, to pity her, to excuse her. He caressed her still more tenderly. And, happy and ecstatic, she thanked him with a

long kiss, which was like a prayer and confidence that here upon his shoulder at least she would not be deceived.

"I love you," he said.

But instead of bringing them together, this word seemed to separate them. His feeling really was entirely different. To understand it, he would have had to concentrate, to look deep into his soul. He fell back before the effort, before the fatigue of thinking. He turned away from himself, and violently took her obedient body.

"I love you. I love you," he repeated.

He continued after a silence.

"Tell me about those men! Is it true? You did not love them?"

"I think I never loved anybody," she said.

"And why? Were your senses dead?"

"No, I don't think so."

She meditated.

"No, not the senses."

"Then, what?"

"I don't know."

She offered him her mouth as if imploring him to find her again in the golden present.

"And I?" he asked gravely.

"Oh, you—you are not like the others. I love what you say. I think of all the things you said, when I am alone. I want you to know me. I want you to talk about me. And—please don't laugh—it seemed to me—it seemed to me that you had a high idea of me . . . Yes?"

He smiled.

"I was happy! I would have liked to tell you how happy I was. I did not dare. I hardly dared speak. I was always afraid to destroy the idea you had of me."

She snuggled up to him, all radiant with hope.

"You understand now," she said. "I wanted to be loved by a man."

"By a man."

She caressed his head without making a reply.

Outside the afternoon began to fade into twilight. The sun went down. The air was fresh. The leaves seemed freer. Henri accompanied the young woman as far as the

lake, where she boarded the little boat. He wanted to walk back on foot as far as Lanzo. He felt in his body a joy and elasticity as in the days of his childhood. He went up the steep hill without difficulty. He wanted to run.

On the road, he saw the pretty Italian. He came up to her and greeted her:

"Madame," he said, "allow me to accompany you a little way."

She accepted, a little surprised, and walking near her, he went into ecstacy over the splendor of this shimmering day.

She detained him before the gate of her villa for several minutes.

"Thank you," she said warmly. "You are charming. I was told that you were a little rude."

He went home. But as he reached the hotel, he continued walking, cross the village of Lanzo, wandered up to the cemetery, and went back through the wood.

V

His head full of echoes and images, he fled into the garden the next morning.

He was happy. He had to express it. He went back to his room and began to write.

He spoke to her about herself. The words became drunken with tenderness, and called forth others still more delirious. And in his thoughts he touched her body. He bent before her image. "Helene . . ." He wrote, "I love you."

He stopped. This word astonished him every time he used it for her. It was not the word he was looking for.

He went back into the garden. The day was dying. Evening came. He wanted to see the road again which they had taken together.

He walked ahead on the shimmering road. His memory was so fresh that he felt it like a living reality. She leaned a little bit on his arm while walking. He was silent. He looked at her pretty foot. . . . "There was a young man at the Embassy. . . ."

VI

The following day he waited once more for Helene at the lake. The splendor of the day was so intense that he was unable to look at the water. Overwhelmed by so much light, the colors faded away. He saw her drift on the lake, stretched out on the bark. He reached out his hand. She jumped out and smiled up at him.

He hardly recognised her in this gown. She was dressed in white like the last time, but still there was a difference. She made a few steps towards the carriage which was waiting and he had the feeling of being with somebody he knew very little. He had thought that now she would be to him nothing but a familiar body, knowing no mysteries. But she was all dressed and kept her secret. "What she gave me the other day," he thought, "amounts to very little."

In his room, however, he felt his mastery over her more intensely. Gliding his fingers over her temples, he lifted her golden hair to see her forehead.

"At last, it's you."

Tenderly she smiled into his eyes.

"Is it all true," she asked, " the things you said in your letter?"

"Don't you feel it?" he said, pressing her to him, as if the force of his arms was that of his love.

This time she gave herself still more completely, and nothing counted for her save her lover's pleasure. She let her cool hair fall over him like a refreshing spring. When she swept it aside with her arm to free his eyes or his lips, she discovered a face that showed no age whatever, neither that of a man nor that of a child. Ecstatic she seemed to cry. "Do you see how I am giving myself? What does it matter? Touch my body. Destroy it. Think of yourself. My body does not count. Seek me in the deep of my eyes. Only there am I entirely, with everything I love and desire. Do you feel this calm in my eyes? Will you forget all the rest? Look closer. Sensitive, intelligent, and all-embracing, and so tender, so madly in love with life and so unsatisfied. Oh, you will love me, when you know my body. My body is a road that goes

from you to me and that you will have to follow quickly. Come. Do you feel that we are coming nearer to each other? Tell me. Do you feel that you are going to love me?"

And he, being more exacting, thought: "My God, how well she dares! Poor little girl! If you knew how everything you give me robs you of something, and even robs me of something. Ah, what did you do? What have you undone?"

Quiet now, she sought to calm him under a shower of tender kisses—kisses without desire, soft and chaste. He remained motionless, with eyes closed. She felt that his mind was far off. She called: "Henri!"

An anguish strangled him. He must leave her now. He judged her perhaps on her present state of mind. "If he only could know," she thought. "All this, is such a little thing I am giving. I have not done anything except give him pleasure." How could she explain to him that obscure world of her heart? She murmured:

"I have a portrait of myself, taken when I was sixteen years old. I must bring it to you."

She continued:

"You would have loved me when I was sixteen. Do you remember your childhood? I evoke it with such a force that I can still inhale the perfumes of those days. Do you remember those summers? There will never be others like them. . . . And then, one golden morning we found the meadow saffron. They had blossomed during the night. That was the time the guests left us. The poplars became yellow. The orioles did not flutter to the walls any more. Those that were flying sped in a straight line. They were migrating. . . . And those evenings! How everything talked to me. The place, the moment, the season took possession of me. I was a forest in a forest, the little girl of the house, the tomboy in field and village. I did not always act as I do now. That was yesterday. A great appetite to feel, to understand, to love, a sort of insufficiency, a silly timidity, although fundamentally a hope that never doubted, a child's happiness, on the verge of tears. . . ."

He heard her greedily, trying to find again this young girl under this woman.

"If you only knew," she said, "how pure a young girl is."

VII

Hardly had she left, when he began to wait for her. He only thought of the time when she would come back. But when she was there, he became cool. On certain days, he was so unhappy that he wished she would leave him.

"Will you write to me?" she said.

What he would write would be their own story. "Do you remember?" And their old meetings would become still more beautiful.

Helene did not have that nostalgia for memories. She described her mood, the gown she was wearing that day, the aspect of the lake. . . . "I am thinking of you. It is so beautiful this morning that everything seems new to me. The rain last night has left a fog on the mountains and in the skies. I put a little bit of you into everything, I am delirious with happiness, I love you."

They came back to each other with ecstasy. It was difficult after a while to keep on this plane. They said to each other:

"You wrote me a charming letter," and quickly spoke of other things, embarrassed by the memory of their exaltations. While walking, Helene looked at Henri from afar. Henri observed her. He saw a fold in her robe, noticed her necklace. But her he did not see.

And they always hungered after the delight of their bodies. Then they hastened towards a goal which they were not sure of wanting at all, and which they, perhaps, only pursued to redeem their haunted spirits.

Up that same staircase and through the same hall, they reached the same room. And there was always the mirror, the bed, the chimney-place. They embraced each other. Their warmth mingled, and spread a beautiful sweetness from one to the other. But quickly they became exhausted and whipped themselves to ever new desires. A magic shimmer had blinded them, but it dissolved before the dark-

ness. They found themselves side by side, dulled and tumbling into sleep.

Then in each other's arms they demanded peace, the forgetting of their defeat. These two different bodies that had just called and understood each other responded now without pleasure. A certain element of old age suddenly united them.

Time passed. They had to part, like the other times. They went into the room, silent, each occupied with the other.

Always ready before her, he watched, as she dressed herself. Sitting before the mirror, throat and shoulders naked, she took into her hands the slender wave of her hair, bound it, and lifting her arms above her head, let that dark supply of gold fall on her temples. In a second, the little head was ready, her fine fingers put on her hat, and she appeared aureoled. Her nape appeared perfumed. Her child's brow was treated again. Her eyes became more luminous. And in the frame, arched by her two nude arms, there appeared a woman's beautiful face.

Then Henri came near. He asked her for a kiss which she granted him absent-mindedly, while putting her last comb into her hair, and before this woman who wrinkled her brows a little, and who was solely occupied with the hour and her gloves, he felt that his desire and his ache were whipped anew.

VIII

When the rain had interfered with their meetings several times in September, Henri decided to settle at Lugano, in Helene's hotel.

One morning he looked for the last time at this room, where they had embraced each other, at the empty chairs, the white table, the window from which the mountain also seemed abandoned. He left the closets open, as well as the doors, and left.

She wanted to see him at her house.

She received him in the drawing room which separated her room from that of her child. It was a small room

entirely decorated with rugs, cushions, and littered with knick-knacks and books.

"I did not think that you would be so completely settled here," he said.

"A traveler's habit. Whenever I stop anywhere, I start settling down for the rest of my life."

Henri examined, somewhat disconcerted, this background which was different from the one he imagined for the past four weeks.

She raised the big brown lace curtains——

"Come here and look at my lake. Here is the San Salvatore. Down there, is your Sighignola. You have been there. Do you want to know how I thought of you here? I stretched myself out on this chaise-longue, facing the mountain that changes its form and color from time to time. It seemed to me that you were happy whenever it was clear and limpid, and that you were not thinking of me, and whenever it became dark, you were sad and loved me more. I have spent many hours here looking at the wall which hid you and helped me see you."

Henri leaned forward and looked at this enormous mass, the vaporous curtain, which was pale grey, with red on the upper fringes. This young man whom Helene evoked—could it really have been he? Did he resemble himself?

"Do not lean over," she said. "One could see you in the garden."

He noticed a man's portrait on the mantelpiece, and touched it carefully.

"Your father?" he asked.

"Yes, and here is Maman," she said, showing him the picture of a young woman who resembled her a great deal. "The pose is a little theatrical. You know photographers are stupid."

"Why don't you ever speak to me of your parents?"

"Maman? It would be difficult to explain Maman to you. She is still young. She has above all else a very great charm. Maman is simply Maman, that's all. There are people who judge her, who allow themselves the liberty of judging her."

Henri hardly cared for this empty, exaggerated picture.

"And your father?" he asked gravely.

"My father? I love him a great deal, but he always made me afraid. I have so much tenderness for Maman. And one day he was so harsh towards her. Still he is not bad. He is simply a man— How should I explain it? He is good and pitiless . . . I think sometimes that if he knew certain things in my life. . . ."

Henri turned around, embarrassed by the expression of the portrait.

"I am delighted with those cushions," he said. "Did you find them here?"

"No, I designed and cut everything myself. Do you like them? I will make you some."

"That would bore you."

"You know well that nothing would bore me. I have a passion for everything I undertake. Whether it's pleasure, studies, toilettes, travels, sweets, everything amuses me, everything interests me."

"I am not like you," he said. "I only admit the things I love. Maurice Astier used to say to me: 'It is strange that you cannot amuse yourself with what you do not love'."

" I know. That's your superiority in that you are exclusive. I give and scatter all I have. I am a trembling water fountain that always falls back upon itself. You, you are a beautiful clear river that goes straight to its destiny. You always have the feeling of the usefulness of your life. You will become rich in the end. I, I have no unfulfilled desires. You want to build a paradise according to your plans? I think that for me there are many kinds of paradise. . . ."

He took her into his arms and pressed her close.

"Look out!" she suddenly said.

Her child was brought in, ready for a walk.

"Sweetheart," said Helene with a voice that Henri did not recognize, "say how-do-you-do to the gentleman."

Gravely the child, dressed in laces, cuddled up to her. Henri gazed at the baby's tender and transparent flesh, those nude arms, that nude throat, those legs, that blossoming life, in freshly laundered linen. "How the child

and woman resemble each other," he thought. "This flesh, it is Helene's flesh, more luminous, purer. . . ."

She pushed the child towards him, but Henri did not dare touch him.

It would have seemed to him that he had touched some forbidden thing, something sacred, more intimate than the most intimate flesh, and he was shocked that she felt this so little, surprised as at an indelicacy.

"Do you allow me to kiss you?" he said as if ashamed.

And as he lightly kissed the child on his little head, respectfully and with a certain timidity, he felt that from this little body there came an odor of happiness, health and dawn. And something in him was strangely moved. Before this child he thought of the sun, of life, the exhaustible time, and also of his age, of his distant childhood, of his old days, of his wasted years.

"Isn't it a pretty child?" Helene said, when the little one had been taken away. "But they are wearisome at that age. He amuses me a moment, and makes me quickly tired."

She added, when she noticed his reproachful mien:

"A child cannot fill the life of a woman. I adore him. If I lost him, it seems to me I would die. But I cannot live for him alone. I need other things. Why do you look at me in that severe way? Don't you love me any more?" she suddenly said, alarmed.

Turning around, he strolled towards the window. She followed him.

"Take me out," she said.

"As you say," he said gravely.

They strolled underneath the chestnut trees, through ripening corn, thinking only of themselves. Behind a village the road became only a path resembling a ravine. He wanted to take Helene's arm. She refused. As though hungry to expend a force that was strangling her, she quickly ascended the steep hill.

On the narrow summit of the mountain, they found a chapel. "Divo Bernardo," Henri read upon a worm-eaten door which he pushed open. They needed a few minutes to accustom their eyes to the darkness. On each

side of the altar, two doors closed by a curtain seemed to lead into the wings and completed the impression of stage scenery. Near a vulgar chromo showing the figure of Jesus pointing to his wounded heart, they saw, in a gold frame, the doll-like face of a priest.

"Did the parroco put his own picture into the church?" Helene asked without looking at Henri.

"Probably. Those who are trying to show us the light very often put themselves between the light and us."

He sought Helene's eyes. She turned aside and left the chapel. He joined her in the sunlight outside. She obstinately refused to show her face. He finally forced her to turn towards him and saw that she was crying.

"What is wrong?"

"Nothing," she said, comforted by the tenderness she felt in his voice. She tried to smile.

"You looked at me just now in a way that hurt."

"What? You are still thinking of that?"

"You mustn't look at me like this, Henri. I am only myself. I cannot give you that perfection you desire."

He took her arm and put his lips upon her mouth for a long time and caressed her cheeks that were hot with fever. The pain they had caused each other fed their tenderness and filled them gradually with a certain sad voluptuousness.

"One can be both unhappy and happy at the same time," she ventured.

"You know that I love you."

"Yes, yes—but sometimes."

"Sometimes the lovers hide their love," he said.

She repeated:

"Love . . . but what is love?" as though suddenly revolted.

"A savage and delicate god to whom one may give everything and still has not given enough."

"But what is he giving us?"

"What man from the beginning of the world has asked of the gods: his elevation and his eternity."

"Truly," she said bitterly, "that's it, what you ask of him."

"It seems so," he said with a low voice, as if he were guilty.

Helene turned her head and remained silent for a long time, evading his eyes.

"What's wrong?" he asked again, timidly.

"I adore you," she murmured.

From this summit, they dominated an immense space. The sun had sunk below the mountains which barred the horizon, and now the horizon mounted, submerging the day below the sky. And the two felt themselves drawn backward slowly, slowly, whirled by the mysterious movement of the world, invincibly turned upside down under the cup of the night. Helene leaned upon Henri's shoulder. He held her with one arm around her waist. Thus they stayed a long time, so united before this peace that they did not even feel the need of speaking. But he wanted to mark this minute.

"Will you remember?" he said very low in the absolute silence.

"Yes."

"Always?"

"Yes."

Hand in hand they wandered down the path they had taken before.

"Are you tired?" he asked every other moment.

"I don't know," she replied. "It is so good to be with you."

At the end of the village, they found an inn.

"Let us dine here," she said.

She began to run, with a child's beautiful gayety.

They were hungry. They felt their youth and happiness. She gave him her hand, above the table. . . .

"You see," she said, "the present is not always so negligible."

She amused herself filling his glass almost constantly, and when he protested:

"You must let me. Don't think about it. You spoil the present moment because of the moment that is still to come and which you will despise when it has come."

She sat down beside him.

"You will love me better, if you love very simply. Love has no need of reasons. The important thing is to love one another. It is not necessary to know why."

"One must always know why," he replied.

When they drove down in a carriage, Lugano was already lighted. Their knees hidden under a cover, they breathed the dark cool air, and watched near them the sudden gleams of lanterns. When they passed a villa, the scent of the gardens came to them in ecstatic waves. They listened to the slow and careful trot of the horses, and the crunching of the brake, whenever the wheel rounded a curve.

"I am happy," said Helene, leaning her cheek against Henri's cheek.

As they came near the city, snatches of song greeted them.

"The gypsies," he said. . . . "Too bad. All was so well."

"What? You don't care for these violins which are so muted by the distance?"

"Oh just hear them play those notes, with that lazy languishing, and suddenly those mad whirling jumps. They call our bodies."

"Why not?"

"It's humiliating."

"No, it is good," said Helene, snuggling up to him.

"Do you think so?" he said with more warmth in his voice.

They reached the town. They had to part. He went home alone and awaited her, more impatient than on the day of their first meeting. When she arrived, they greedily loved each other.

When he remained stretched out later on, without saying anything:

"Are you sleeping?" she asked him softly.

"No," he breathed.

He saw again Helene's child, that little life so detached from her own, whose shimmering whiteness had left under his eyelids a luminous impression. Then he thought of her, and he asked himself if this burst, this freshness, was not exactly what he was missing.

She leaned over to him, a little bit alarmed:

"I want to know what you are thinking about."

"I love you," he replied, wishing she would be silent.

Through the large open window, there entered a Neapolitan serenade, clung to the night, and entered their souls, until they could not help humming it softly with the iterant violin.

"Oh, it is becoming unbearable," said Helene.

She rose and closed the window.

"Thus we shall not hear it any more," she said. "Yes, you were right. This song is as sad as death."

"It's a love song," said Henri.

IX

One morning, Henri was sitting on the terrace and turning the pages of a book, without reading it. The day was shimmering with light. A gull winged calmly its way through the air. Helene was just dressing. She was going to come down for him, refreshed by sleep and a bath. The sky, the water, the flowery terrace, were alive and mingled their colors.

He noticed Helene dressed in white, coming towards him. He ran towards her.

"You—I was thinking of you," he said joyously. "How beautiful you are."

"I must speak to you," she said, forcing a smile upon her lips. "My husband will arrive."

A quiver went over his face and it grew pale.

"You know," she said, "we can see each other nevertheless."

With lowered head, Henri looked at the gravel path.

"I shall go," he said.

"I knew you would. Why?"

"I shall leave Wednesday night."

"Wednesday, that's tomorrow."

He did not answer. She became still paler, and leaned against an orange tree. Seeing her face like this, he felt still more strength to accept the fact, and even experienced

a certain pleasure. He did not like to see her suffer, but when she suffered he loved her still more.

"Just a minute, please," she said, as she ran away to hide her tears.

She came back almost immediately.

"Those poor little moments that still remain—I want to spend them with you."

They made no further allusions to their parting, and the day went by without an apparent thought of it. But in the evening, she said to him:

"I did not want to talk about it—to make this day not any different from the others—but something tortures me. At what time are you going?"

She fingered the objects he was taking with him, then looked through the window and gazed at the landscape he would leave behind.

"These last hours are frightening," she said at last. "I cannot forget that they are the last ones. I would rather you would talk a little now."

"Yes," he said.

The horses trotted sorrowfully, and slowed down every few minutes. Angrily the coachman bent down, whipped them on their bellies, and quickly they began to canter again. Helene often asked about the time.

"Oh, we have time," she said.

It seemed to them that they were not together any more.

Henri thought of the solemn parting which stood before them, but they were too uncomfortable in this carriage and bothered with the dust and wind. They would be able to talk more at ease at the station. Their hands, tired from lying in each other, gradually loosened their hold. They suddenly became aware of it, and quickly took each other's hands again, a little like horses that forget to keep on trotting and suddenly dash off again with a vim.

They arrived at the station. Helene looked at the clock. They had a few minutes left.

Often they turned towards that clock and could not keep their eyes from it. . . .

There was a shrill whistle. They looked at each other. He entered the train. He felt that it slowly set itself in

motion, that it took him away from Helene. . . . The moment had come, as they had expected. Life had joined them and separated them. It was not painful. It was even pleasant. The train rolled off, lost itself in the distance. Helene remained behind. How simple it was! Henri thought:

"It's almost nothing. It's nothing . . ." They were still united by that thread of their eyes, and that thread became thinner and thinner, ready to snap. Already he began to see her only dimly. He forced his tired eyes to remain fixed upon her until he could not see her any more. But already he did not see anything any more. It was over.

Before him a man was sitting alone. It was the first time since months that he saw a strange face from so near, a face that was not Helene's. It seemed to him that he was falling brusquely back into the real ordinary world, where the crowd was living. . . . Behind the window pane the meadows were gleaming, hesitated a moment, then withdrew one after the other, in file, behind the train. Helene was returning home now. He saw clearly the streets and the carriage, Helene wrapped in her cloak. The train dashed past a white road which was flanked sometimes by a chestnut tree. Nobody passed this road at this hour. It was a very lonely road, Helene was probably now in her room. Oh. Her isolated silhouette, lost on the station platform. She drew a gesture before becoming blotted out, a sad gesture with her hand. . . . Behind the window-pane the road had now disappeared. There were now flowery fields where the evening began to sink slowly. The trees sketched oblique shadows. The lake, at this moment, must be very beautiful, of a hard azure, with the pink stain of a sail, just as both saw it the other evening, from that chapel, whither they had gone together. He sees again the little dinner, the cover under the leaves. Helene spoke to the inn-keeper in Italian. Then the carriage went toward the sparkling city. They lie in each other's arms. They are at peace and happy. And now there are only gloomy slopes with a scattered farm, from time to time. Across this space, it seemed that the train became torpid and began to fall asleep. How far away already all the

past! And how far even that parting, that station and that hand of hers are now!

Ah, to see her again for a moment, to talk to her, to have a minute with her, one lonely minute, and to tell her all he felt, that oppression, that madness. He saw again that sweet face, much as he saw it when she swept her hair aside, to be still more nude and readable. With his head thrown back in the angle of the car, his eyes closed as though he was sleeping, he tried to keep the memory alive.

Sometimes he fell asleep, but woke up quickly, fearful of having lost in his sleep Helene with the shimmering hair, the uncovered face, and her smile. But faithfully she came back. He took her to his breast, trembling with fear lest she might be lost entirely.

At Paris he had to fight his way through a crowd at the station, always carrying with him that fragile picture. He was afraid that somebody might talk to him, that somebody might nudge him. He held her picture like a lamp and made himself small to better protect it.

He arrived at home. His parents kissed him. . . . Then he knew that they had truly parted.

X

All day long he remained silent and as though absent, sunk into himself, resisting the life of his paternal home, their habits which they tried to impose upon him.

At last a letter arrived the next morning. He waited a long time before opening it. He had locked himself in and threw himself on his bed.

"You are going," she had written. "You are in the train that will take you away. Just now, I feel still in all my body, the happiness you have given me. Yes, when I came back from the station, I carried you in my heart so strongly that I was happy in spite of it all. And then I found my room. I thought of yesterday, this morning. Tears strangled me and would not flow. The quiet landscape was a chaos. Now everything flees from me. Now that you have left me. You are he who leaves. It is a dif-

ferent thing with you. What will you keep from me among your people? I stay behind. Nothing new or old will come between your memory and me, I remain the way you have left me, on that station platform. . . . I stay."

Henri drank these words hastily, almost without feeling them, like one who is very thirsty. "That's short," he thought. He began to reread it, slowly. . . . And he stopped at intervals, started again until the words became drained of their meaning.

He only lived for his letters. He loved this Helene with a new love, this woman whose emotions, melancholy, magic now appeared to him pure and sweet.

"Your silhouette," she wrote, "is on all my roads. I see your caressing gestures, that suddenly, carried off by your thoughts, become brusque and rapid. I see your lively eyes, those deep, far off eyes."

The pictures ravished him. What, he had made gestures! He had those eyes? He looked at himself in the mirror. It was true. He had before him a tender Henri, strong, sensitive, intelligent, charming. Then he smiled at his image, and stretching out his arms, cried, "Helene!"

Often at night, when he was with his parents, he described the lakes, to comfort his heavy heart. And he sang the Italian names of the villages and mountains. He mingled them with the names of flowers which Helene loved. He added olea fragenza to the paths, climbing citronelles to the iron railings of the villino, the caperbushes to the holes in the walls, the arums to the gardens of the Villa Ciani. He became exalted about the terraces, spoke of the water, the air, Vernate and his little perfumed cemetery, Morcote, and its rose-enclustered staircase, Comano, where one dines underneath the leafy bowers, and Lugano, whence rises the ecstatic serenade of the violins at night.

His father sat listening and smoking his pipe, his eyes on the floor. His mother set a reserved smile against this lyric outburst. And he had the impulse to flee or cry out: "You don't understand me. Her name is Helene. She is beautiful. She is all my life."

The Astiers came back. He did not go back to them because of a certain sense of shame. He even met Maurice

with less pleasure, as he could not tell him everything any more.

Maurice was astonished.

"My family is wondering why they never see you any more. Why don't you come any more? Helene asked you."

The plane-trees of the avenues were beginning to shed their leaves now. The poplars in the meadows held towards the sky only a thin and transparent network of leaves. The town shook off the remainder of the summer.

In the evening and far into the night sometimes, Henri wandered through the lighted and empty streets. An immense hope sped him on; he watched the windows of the houses. Unknown hearts were beating there, tender hearts, suffering ones, perhaps desolate hearts. He had in him so much love that he could have understood and consoled all the sorrows of the infinite city. He wandered along the streets underneath the arc lights, his face lifted up as if he would inhale the night.

XI

Lugano sank back into the limbo of the past. The distance between Helene and Henri became greater. The letters were not sufficient now any more. They felt that they were repeating themselves.

"It is too little," he complained. "You are not sending enough. But what I must say I cannot say."

She wrote less and less. She said; "I would like to be near you, lean my head on your shoulders, without having anything between us."

The memories he had of her lost their outlines. The photographs he had gathered did not retain the soul of Helene.

Helene wrote him one day: "I am only sending you a few lines this morning. It is too beautiful. The lake is bristling with crystals glittering in the sun and the wind. I have slept so well last night that I am weary of being well. I have nothing to tell you. I would like to look at you."

He did not like it that she was so sensitive to the pleasure

of the moment, or at any rate happy. Was she really adapting herself to the separation? Was she beginning to forget? No. That is not possible. What she has given, cannot be taken back.

And still he felt that she was right. What really had he given her to demand that she remain faithful to him, happy to suffer for him. And what did she have to hope for in the future? She was not even sure of coming back to France. Will they ever see each other again?

Marrying her? He was thinking of it. Sometimes he decided to do it. "Because I loved her," he thought. She would get a divorce. She would be his wife. He could not live without her.

But when he wanted to tell her, a strange fear stopped him. Time and distance were between them already. The words they sent each other were now nothing but words. He needed to see her, to touch her, to whip her passion to the undeniable warmth of a love, to the positive taste of a kiss.

XII

And then one day she announced that she would arrive.

When she was there, he led her without saying a word, into the light and looked at her silently. She seemed to him more beautiful than his memory of another beauty, more certain, at any rate.

"I loved you so," he told her, "in waiting for you that it seemed to me it would disappoint me. And you ravish me now, I have not loved you enough."

She told him that she was living with the parents of her husband. She did not know when she would go back, but it would be soon, probably in a week.

He looked at her ardently, and this look counted.

"You impress me," he said, "like one unknown and like an old friend. I am drunken and my spirit is clear. How I love you!"

He knelt down.

"What do you promise me? What is there in your beauty? What does it mean? Can you keep such a

promise? I put my all in you. Am I right? Am I crazy? Are you my destiny?"

She lifted him up.

"I would be strong before you," he said. "I cannot. You are too beautiful."

He kissed her hands. He repeated:

"I love you."

And in his voice, this word had the air of a great plaint.

She took the young man's head in her hands and drew him to her breast.

"I always have near you that strange impression of not giving enough," she said. "One cannot prove that one loves."

She let herself be conquered, happy at his brutality, at this virile action which tore him to her, which crushed all of life's directions. He smothered her with kisses, and sought her with all his being, as if he wanted to reach this time the thing nothing could ever take away from him again. And she, ready to cry with anguish, with joy, with sensual madness, thought: "My God, how he loves me! It is too much. But I am only myself. I have only myself to give him." A fear came to her from this man, who gave her so much love, and which she did not want to break. A doubt seized her. Was this love really meant for her? Perhaps his rude ardor sought something in her which was not in her? She felt that her ecstatic lover was a secret and severe judge who would be deceived, and who would make his decisions about her according to mysterious laws. The kisses once exchanged, the words, the letters and all that held them together, were weighed in that instant. And she could not do anything. This verdict depended on things that had happened. She shivered. What did he think? What would he decide, this inexorable judge? Into what solitude would she fall, if he condemned her? Ah, in this unknown room, upon this strange bed, pale and tortured by caresses, she surely would play a pitiful rôle. Therefore she pressed timidly, with all her forces against him so that he would not see her.

But Henri wanted to look into her eyes. He forced her to let him look. He was astonished to find nothing in them

but a Helene who resembled herself. For a moment his hope of victory hesitated. What did he hope to attain from her that he had not already attained? Because Helene was there, what did he expect? Has he not had enough experience? But perhaps her instinct pushed her, too, towards other goals, more secret, higher objectives. . . . Perhaps it was not Helene he pursued. . . . And as they cuddled up against each other, body to body, brow to brow, he had the sudden feeling that his objective was Helene, but beyond her his life projected outside of himself. That goal at last, that was he.

"It is you I seek, beautiful body, dear head, big eyes."

Still more rudely he sank against her.

It seemed that Helene approved it. She threw herself against him under his blows, precipitated herself against him, exhausted herself, was in accord with him. And he felt that this time she had truly given herself forever.

"Are you not afraid?" he asked his beloved.

She nodded no. It was she, now, who was desire, thirst, will. . . . But he, as if suddenly his thought had emerged from obscure paths:

"No, mingle your life with my eternal life, and your flesh with my flesh indissolubly, impossible. Because I am at stake, I am more exacting. I do not wish it."

She shivered.

"I love you more than you think."

And holding him in her arms:

"A child. A child for us," she begged. "Give. Give."

He pushed her back.

"No," he said.

Then she felt herself falling away from him forever; that she was judged.

Now lying beside him, she thought of her husband, of his sombre life which she would resume near the man whose kindness she hated. . . . She would have to listen to his stories, busy herself with the house, receive his friends, watch him play with his son whom he amuses, with a nervous laughter, a fatiguing laughter. What did she do that fate was so harsh with her? She who had called that interior joy so much, without which life is no longer life,

and who had sacrificed all for happiness. She wanted to love, to be loved. She was not greedy. She had given to love what she had asked of love.

"Listen," she finally said, "I know you do not love me any more. You really wanted to love me. You did what you could. But you don't love me. You are feeling it."

He wanted to speak.

"Wait," she said, "I want to ask you something, the last request. Tell me what you think. We will separate for ever, you understand I must know. You are the best part life has given me. A few days of my childhood, and then you, I have nothing else. If I had not known you, I would have known nothing. . . . Tell me everything. I—I love you, I understand everything. . . . Truth is never altogether bad."

"Dearest," he said.

He wanted to press her close to him. She refused him.

"We must base nothing on pity," she said. "Explain. You know so well how to explain."

"What a strange woman you are," he said with an admiration which she felt was sincere. "I would have liked to have made you happy."

"Yes," she said, "you liked me."

Turning aside a little, she added, very softly:

"You thought of marrying me?"

He nodded yes.

"Thank you," she said. "I knew that you were thinking of it, but you hesitated and did not dare tell me anything. This morning, when you expected me, you thought that this day would decide between us."

"You knew it," he said, touched to the point that he would have sacrificed everything for her.

"Tell me why you made your decision now?"

He was silent. She lifted her eyes to him.

"Because of my past? You, who are so intelligent, have prejudices? My past, it is nothing. I know it better than you do. From the moment I knew you, all was blotted out."

"You cannot know," he said. "You are not the judge."

"You are thinking of my body?" she continued, and her voice changed. "But those are the demands of another

age. I am not a material thing. It is I who am at stake and not my body."

He hesitated.

"Please tell me. Tell me everything."

"I know," he said finally, "what you forgot. But I know it well. Your body? No, I don't think I am thinking of your body . . . I think of you. Your heart, your intelligence, your knowledge of life, the wealth that is in you, your grace, your love, your immense capacity for love, and all that you are."

He had spoken softly, almost with fear. He saw he wounded her. She threw her proud head back.

"You did not bring me your life unblemished. Why do you demand it of me?"

"If you are not what I am, how can I love you?" he asked. "Women represent for us the most marvellous promises. Our minds are so calculating. We are so far away from childhood. You are there, as though you had run away from our forgotten nature, to bring us the scent of fresh things. You are the matter of life, the sense of the youth of the world, the bath of resurrection. . . . Why don't you want to resemble us? I went to you, trembling, as toward a goddess. And you made your part of the road. You are only a comrade."

"Yes," said Helene. "I understand. You love the women more than they love themselves. I could not love myself the way you loved me. Pardon me."

Tears welled up in her eyes. She continued:

"A woman's life is hard. You demand our acceptance and our resistance at the same time."

She wiped her eyes.

"Why did you come so late?"

But quickly catching herself she said:

"I shall go. My fate is to travel."

She looked around the room and at the bed.

"Let us go," she said. "I do not want to leave you here. I wanted to say good-bye to you among the trees."

A carriage took them away. It was late. A fine fog began to rise above the roads. Upon the Concorde and towards the Etoile, and nearer at the intersection of two

streets, the approach of evening had blotted out the horizon. A distant tramway crunched.

"I am thinking of her who will be your wife," said Helene. "A young girl. . . . You have often spoken to me of a young girl. . . . Let me finish. . . . Her name is Helene . . . like mine. It is strange when one has sorrow, how one understands everything. You love her."

He burst out.

"Yes, I love her. You will also love her. What you reproach me with is that you are not that young girl."

"No, you are mistaken," he cried, with an accent so sincere that she was surprised.

"What, you did not know it? I am sure you love her. You will see."

She gazed at the long avenue glimmering in the faint light. She continued:

"Helene. . . . My name. Do I look like her a little? No? Don't say it . . . I know it. You who cannot tell me that. I am sure that she looks like me and that she is what I was. I envy her. I am not jealous. Don't remember me only to love her better. You see what they will do, the women who are badly loved."

Henri, whose heart was full to bursting, said brusquely:

"I love you."

She turned to him, her eyes filled with amazement. He blushed and wanted to speak. But she closed his mouth with her hand:

"Don't repeat that word. It does me good, nevertheless. I love you. That means—I am happy because of you."

He repeated:

"No, I love you."

She took his hand and lifted it to her lips.

"Child," she said.

The carriage entered the Bois. Helene breathed deeply the cool air.

"How good this is. I was right in wanting to see these trees around me."

They left the carriage and followed a street.

"Do you regret the past?"

"I don't regret it. I regret what might have been."

"Helene," he said suddenly, "I want you to be happy."

"Happy? Oh, that is not possible any more, and I don't ask for it. There are so many irreparable things in my life and happiness cannot adapt itself to them. Never mind. With age one gets more difficult and exacting. Let us be wise."

She smiled. Her eyes glittered. She said with an almost happy air:

"Good-bye."

She gave him her hand. Then shaking her pretty head as if to suppress her tears:

"I shall go away with a song, just as one sings when one is afraid on a lonely road at night."

He tried to retain her. He could not speak.

Before she vanished, she turned around and waved her gloves towards him. For a long time he stood motionless, wrapped in thought. At last he wandered slowly away in the other direction.

XIII

She did not write. He let time sweep away the memories he had kept up to then with so much fervor. Everything became distant. He had no more past. The longer days brought long evenings, beautiful and healing. Then, having stripped off his youth, he returned to the Astiers.

A year went by before he asked for the hand of the young girl. He declared himself suddenly one evening, while the Astiers were receiving their friends for the last time before leaving for Sauveterre. Helene seemed frightened, threw an icy "no" into his face and ran away.

"I thought you liked him," Madame Astier asked her daughter. "Your father likes him a great deal."

"I did not say that I disliked him," Helene answered. "I prefer him to all the young men who have come here. But if I should, later on . . . if I should love another one?"

Madame Astier drew her to her heart and kissed her.

"Don't you find him intelligent?"

"Yes," said Helene.

"Has he not a charming nature, a good character, a frank heart?"

"Yes."

"You don't find him ugly?"

"No."

"Well?"

The young girl hid her face on her mother's shoulders and remained thus for a long time bewildered and confused. Finally she said:

"I want you to force me."

When she was alone with Henri, she said with a harsh voice:

"I know I have hurt you. Please forgive me."

She remained standing, stiffening in her pride, pale, ready to weep. He understood that all depended on him alone now.

"I should ask for your forgiveness," he said. "You did not know."

He explained that he connected her with his plans and projects. Surprised she lifted her big eyes towards him. She said:

"You are mistaken about me. My parents repeat that I am nothing but a child. They are right. I am nothing."

"Without you, I am nothing, either."

She wanted to say everything.

"I have a great deal of friendship for you. When you are here, I feel much happier. And still . . ."

She blushed.

"I ask myself . . . I am afraid . . . is that enough?"

But he knew already that she would be his wife.

"Helene, there is a more imperious feeling, that is true. But I do not want you to know it. If you were now in love with me, where would I lead you to? I do not know entirely if what I feel for you is really love, but it is a presentiment of love, the certainty that we two will find love. You are not a child, neither am I. It is the woman and the man that demand this union. Everything is still before us. Love is before us. We are only on the threshold. Here is my hand. I give it you. Put yours into mine. Look ahead, and then look at me. Have you confidence in me?"

"Yes," she said.

"You are not afraid? If you are not afraid, give me your hand."

He received her soft hand which was trembling a little, and held it in his a long time without pressing it. His hand, too, was trembling.

"Henri," said the young girl.

And in this word, the new sound of which enchanted her, her still confused feelings began to clarify themselves.

"Helene," he said.

He repeated this name, astonished a moment, heard the echo from the past. "Helene . . . Helene," he murmured.

"Everything will start today."

M. Astier, Madame Astier, Maurice came in. They resumed an habitual tone of conversation to reassure the girl. The young girl came and went, hiding her bewilderment under an air of agitation. It was a fine afternoon. The day was sinking, and the lamps were not lighted. M. Astier, who did not dare look at Henri, took his arm and led him to the window.

"Look," he said, "how beautiful Paris is tonight."

He showed a vista of roofs, palaces and bridges, the slender line of poplars, and the last red of the sun. Then there came from his voice, ordinarily so carefree, but now trembling with emotion:

"It is strange," he continued. "Man opposes man in nature and thinks of fleeing it by following the spirit, as if mighty nature were not the human genius."

But Henri did not hear him. He remained standing looking towards Helene, and stood near the piano before the big lilies which were being brought in. She plunged her wrists between the branches and shook the moist leaves. He looked at her ecstatically. Madame Astier, who watched him, came softly to him:

"Now, what are you thinking about?" she said.

He answered:

"About my house."

THE PASSION OF ARAGON

By PIERRE GUITET-VAUQUELIN

(From *Les Œuvres Libres*)

"Come thou and visit me, and I will relate to thee tales of love and mystery. The Devil will laugh loudly if thou dost find in them aught but pleasure. But in truth, God will rub his hands with glee if thou but findst in them both pleasure and profit."

—D. Inigo Vergara. Sahum. 11/6/20.

I

The Pena Blanca

THE distant music of the bells of the cattle in the silence of the hills wakened Ramon, who had been sleeping on the floor in the guest chamber of Paco, son of Cabaillud. He rose, tightened across his narrow waist the broad belt of red wool, arranged his balloonlike trousers of grey velvet corduroy, wrapped himself in his long cape of rough homespun and proceeded to climb down the short ladder. As a precaution against the deep winter snows, the three habitable rooms of the refuge were built high up from the ground, as ancestral homes had been the better to defend oneself against the onslaughts of beasts and men.

A few stars, whitened by dawn, were twinkling in the heavens. Not a breath disturbed the air; and the torrents that rushed afar into invisible chasms seemed to be tumbling into void, as if some giant's hand had pierced the earth through and through, that in space the waters might lose themselves, the waters from which all proceeds, noise, strength, beauty, aye life itself.

Ramon turned his eyes towards the breach in the hills that marks the port of Venasque. He looked at it for a while; then he gave forth a long sigh, as one resolved to

abandon forever something of his past life, to which nothing henceforth is to bind him, something irretrievably gone.

He finished his descent, stepping down the thick planks of wood, which rain, snow and erosion had rendered so porous that they felt like soft moss and the feet almost left their imprint upon them.

Ramon walked round the hut, and gazed down into the valley of the Eserra, that ran deep down, burrowed out of the heart of Upper Aragon. But the gorge was still wrapped in darkness, that silent darkness of the great hills that are a symbol of death, or of the disintegration of the things that last longer than living beings.

He sat him down on the edge of the little plateau of Pena Blanco and engaged in deep contemplation of the Cyclopean wall that barred the horizon towards the south. The Monts Maudits, huge masses, piled themselves up into the sky as if to stifle nascent dawn, then great tellurian waves, with crests, some sharp, some blunt, the Nethou, the Maladetta, the Milieu, the Corone and the Albe, where glittered the frozen froth of the glaciers, like pools of mercury, striated fanwise by black lines, the famous crevasses. One could guess up there the splitting of prehistoric blocks, the chaos of stone falls, the trail of the moraines, aligning their erratic boulders like straggling black sheep blackened by lightning.

The more the man became absorbed in this contemplation, the more he felt the horror of this silent, immovable eternity. Perhaps in ancient days, before the rush of the great waters, before the march of the ice cutting, the original curve of the land, life had prospered there, flowers and plants bloomed in wild profusion, sheltering monstrous beasts. . . .

True, Ramon knew nothing of the past of the world and could hardly conjure up former ages. But he was feeling that reaction which the things of nature cause in the least reasoning of beings. He was a prey to that anguish of the unknown, the misunderstood, that has ever awakened in man the instinct for abstractions and forced him to seek in himself the reason of the universe, to try to find in his own soul the essence of his world.

Ramon was frightened to feel his soul thus crushed by the silent immovability of nature, to realise that his soul was being stopped here, like a beast with its retreat cut off. Behind him the hills. Before him still the hills. Right and left of him, ever this convulsion of a cursed earth that seems like never to recover its capacity of bearing grace and fruit. Below him, darkness. Above him the only respite; a dim light in the heavens, not the dazzling glory of paradise but rather the uncertain gloaming of purgatory.

The tinkling of the bells was drawing nearer, and one could discern the tapping of the little horns on the thin layer of turf that covered the rock and sounded hollow.

The shepherd hailed Ramon.

"Good morning, man."

"Good morning, friend," said Ramon.

This shepherd was short, stumpy, with a squashed, blackened face where a flat nose had a struggle to show itself. The small eyes were curiously watchful in the depths of the orbits, doubtless the result of seeking to escape from the reverberation of the glaciers and the blast of icy winds. He presented a striking contrast with the thin, elegant figure of Ramon, with his long, nervous legs, his supple arms where, under the coloured shirt, one could divine agile muscles. The shepherd's head, with his receding forehead, had a something bestial about it, index of an obstinate, dangerous inquisitiveness. Its ugliness set out sharply Ramon's proud, elongated head, with its big eyes, fiery and mobile, its decided nose, its salient cheekbones, its clean-shaven jaws under the tan of which one felt there ran the blood of a conquering race. Doubtless this shepherd was the representative of an autochthonous tribe that had suffered from its isolation, from its lack of fresh blood, from its unambitious satisfaction with its half nomadic, unchanging lot, whereas Ramon personified the adventurous tribes of lusty Iberians, themselves ever ready to embark on distant fights, who had enriched themselves with the best blood of successive invaders: blond Gauls come from the North, coppered Moors, sent in dense masses from Legendary East to scent folklore with their sad fatalism, and to carve out their stone lace in old Granada.

Strangers to one another, surely, and ill assorted for mutual understanding or love.

But they were both attached to the same soil, chained by its rough charms; and, despite all, they were linked to each other by the genius of the place and by the magic of sonorous common speech, an influence much stronger than is often supposed in reckoning with the passions of man. They were as members of a great family, for a time split up, meeting again at the starting point, after centuries of travel and adventure, some impoverished, some ennobled, yet brothers withal, some humble without hatred, some pitied but not despised. In their meeting, there was the light of a dim sympathy, an almost unconscious tenderness, reinforced by the apparent indifference of outside things.

Dawn was on the way.

A feeble light, translucent, aquamarine in shade, was illuminating the line of the heavens, limited as it was by that amphitheatre of gigantic hills. Little by little the green tinge disappeared. Harmonies of pinks succeeded, in strong crescendo, then paling again to merge into a lake of silver. The glaciers were waking to life. The outline of hillocks and crests stood out in lonely intensity, while from the gorges there rose a thick mist, dense like fluid cotton.

An eagle hovered over the flock for a moment; then he altered his imperial wings and drew away towards the Trou du Yoro.

With the suddenness of an arrow in flight, a venturesome sun ray fell on Sauvegarde, whose cliff was enlivened by a scarlet wound.

Ramon had lifted his head, open-mouthed, nostrils throbbing, his whole being tense in waiting attitude. He opened his cape, as if to accept the sun, and he listened for the many voices that, in the mountains, dispel the silence with the coming of the light.

Then the shepherd stretched himself out flat on his belly beside Ramon and started his questions in his incurious voice:

"Whence comest thou?"

"From Eriste, beyond Benascos. Down along."

"Who art thou?"

"I am Ramon, the son of Nerin the muleteer."

It was Ramon's turn to ask.

"And what do they call you?"

"Nada."

"Nada, do you say? But, is that a man's name?"

"I know not."

"Who is your father?"

"I know not . . ."

"Whence are you?"

"I know not . . ." and with his stumpy shepherd's hand, he outlined a semicircle towards the closed-in horizon.

He was thence, from anywhere and nowhere, from the hills. He was the offspring of nomads, breeding at haphazard as they met in chance encounters, sowing their rare heirs here and there as they camped, dying often of forced sterility, result of their isolation.

Ramon spoke further:

"What do you do all the day?"

"I go."

"Have you no friends?"

"None, ever."

"But God, you have him?"

"Perhaps."

"Do you pray to him daily?"

"Oh, no," said Nada with a naïve laugh. "Once a year, when the priest comes up to the Pla de Beret to bless the flock."

He seemed to be thinking for a moment, then he murmured: "But, what matter? God cares naught for the prayers of men who frequent not his churches. God is not the same as he used to be. That is natural, for there are so many people on the earth now. They say—those who pass by—that He does not let the grenades, the fig trees, the vines, bloom as early as before. I have never seen fig trees or grenades or vines. What is certain sure is He does not cure as formerly the sheep that are sick."

"What do you think should be done, Nada?"

"A wise man were he who would know that," said the little dark man, rolling on to his side.

"Do you know the towns?" asked Ramon.

"No. Dost thou know them?"

"Yes, I do know them, Nada . . . savage towns."

"They eat bread there?" enquired Nada.

Ramon looked at him in surprise.

"Bread? Of course, Nada, and many other good things besides. But bread and such good things are not all that matters in life. And there is suffering in the towns, among men."

Nada murmured:

"Bread is good!" and added in a deep naïve, eager voice like that of a child fired with some great wish, "Ah, yes, bread is very good, white bread, you know, like snow."

A streak of covetousness had lit up the deep sunk eyes of Nada; but the desolation of the Cirque Maudit has a way of never letting its sons escape for long into the thought of better pastures.

"Then you do not eat bread, Nadito?"

"Aye, sometimes, when I follow the paths where travel the men of the valleys. Then, thou knowest, they give me some. And . . . I eat it."

He reared himself up on his two arms, like a grotesque sphinx and whistled, a long whistle, to call back the sheep whose bells one could hear getting duller. Then he lay down flat on his belly again and started pleating bits of grass with his thick fingers and round, stumpy nails like pebbles. Ramon allowed the pity with which this humble wish had filled him to die out, and gave free play to his own selfish ends. Laying his hand on Nada's shoulder he said, roughly:

"So, Nada, it happens you follow the roads where go the men of the valleys?"

"Have you seen any go by these last days?"

"Several."

"With their wives?"

"With or without wives, according to the days and the men."

"Have you not seen a splendid girl pass by, of my height, tall like a pine tree, more beautiful than the flowers of the valleys, more enchanting than a summer's day?"

"I have seen girls pass by with light-coloured neckcloths."

"This one is brown and proud. Oh, Nada, you must have seen her, for all men turn when they meet her to have a look at her."

"Be she brown or fair, for me, what matters it?"

Ramon's hand gripped the shepherd's shoulder till it hurt.

"They have probably told you not to speak of it . . . unless you love her also, like the others, all the others."

Nada turned his flattened face towards him, opened wide his eyes under the bushy eyebrows. He was shaking with stupid laughter.

"Love . . . whom? And then, love . . . what's that?"

"Paz Padilla!"

"Let go my shoulder. Thou art hurting me," said Nada calmly, "I don't know this girl. And what is it thou dost mean by love? Come! Never have the girls of the valley followed the men of the hills. One leaves not the white for the sour bread. And those who go with honest folk have no wish to have truck with bears."

He started pleating his grass again, and gave advice:

"If thou be the fellow thou dost seem, have heed of women as of an abyss. Do as I do: live alone. See thee: the izards go in company and they fear the pebbles I throw at them. But the eagle goes alone and laughs at the twirl of my staff, and, when he pleases, he robs me of my finest lambs."

"Say not another word, my poor Nada. I am assured now that you have not seen La Paz; for the eagle himself would follow her like a tame magpie."

Then, in that swinging lyric, so primitive and romantic, that belongs to the races that sing of their joys and their sorrows, Ramon told him about love. And told him too, what La Paz Padilla meant to those who had once looked into her eyes; the spring that it gives us dangerous bliss to drink of after a day's forced march over the parched hills; the sun that warms you after the fog, but may make you mad; the turf after a mass of loose stones; or when you are dying of hunger and thirst, the scented milk of the slow ewes, or the mushroom, the myrtle and the wild strawberry in the cool forest glade. . . .

Nada was paying no attention to this useless verbiage. Of what advantage to speak so much and say nothing? He was deaf to the voice of other men. He heard, in the gorges, the torrents roaring, he heard the pine trees whine under the blast of the south winds, he heard the rumble of avalanches, and sought not to understand.

But Ramon felt the need for speech, because his heart was overflowing with bitterness and hatred, with confused tenderness and with hope; because the love of simple souls is a plaintive hymn or a triumphal song one sings ill to oneself, but hears grandly in the echo of sympathetic souls. Ramon looked at the glaciers, now flaming under the high sun, and at the sinister, ragged outline of the sombre pine trees, trenching on the crude whiteness of eternal snows.

Then he clenched his teeth and said in a hollow voice, digging the while his fingers again into the shepherd's shoulder:

"Do you know, Nada, that I have . . . killed for her sake?"

Nada turned round, all of a piece, throbbing with new life.

"Thou hast killed a man . . . thou?"

The shepherd's voice had lost its dull, lifeless impassivity. To the babble of love enthusiasm, he had listened unconcerned; such fervour and passion and empty violence had no meaning for him. His soul was quite closed to sentimental complications; Ramon was, to him as a man from a strange land, speaking in a strange tongue. But the subject of murder awoke the inherent violent qualities within him, the brutality of past ages. The impulsive actions, full of rape and vengeance, of their common ancestors drew them nearer together.

"Thou hast killed a man, Ramon!"

"Yes, for this woman."

Nada knelt on the scant and dried grass which covered the narrow plateaus of Pena Blanca. His little, dark hands with the short, brown fingers shrivelled up, his heavy lips tightened over the close and pointed teeth. His whole body recalled the attitude of men lying behind strategic rocks in wait for the enemy.

II

La Paz Padilla

Ramon looked out of the gorge of Eserra as if he were looking beyond the mountains and his sorrows. Then he turned again toward Nada who still waited. He told again, slowly and precisely, one of those stories of the elementary passions which seem more impressive because they are so frank and strong.

"I am the son of Pablo Nerin, of Eriste, beyond Benascos. My father was one of the richest of many rich men in the valley. He raised a breed of mules with a short backbone, fine head and brawny legs. When the haying was over, he, with a few agile lads, armed with long whips and wearing sandals, went through all the French villages on the other side of those mountains. After the first red leaves of October had fallen, followed by light snows on the mountain sides, he returned with fewer mules but his girdle was heavy with gold pieces. He brought us many fine presents: watches, bags, combs and glistening dress goods for the women. And for me, his only child, new weapons, aigrettes and ribbons that on holidays I might be the most gorgeously dressed of all. My father, thrifty as he was, loved the beautiful valley and wanted his son to be the richest boy from Eriste to Barbastro. At Benascos, every one spoke of his far-seeing wisdom and his fame extended from Sarragosse to Lerida. Between times, he taught me how to raise the stubborn mule and also how to cultivate the grape so the vines would yield heavy, ruby clusters."

Ramon uttered a deep sigh and then went on:

"I was a joyous young thing. No one could equal me in tracking the izards to the passes of Malibierne or the little bears of Bagueniola. Then in the first days of September, during the feast of the Virgin, I used to lead the young people of my age in to the church yard for the dance of men. I was he who was adorned with most bouquets of sweet-smelling basilic. For the maids were assiduous in showing me, long in advance, the little pots where grew, under their care, the herb of love which alone he must discover whom they wish for a sweetheart.

"Old men, too, loved me for my strength, and old women for my riches, and both saw in me the dreamed-of husband for their daughters. Ah, could you have seen, Nada, in the hour of the *jota,* all the young things running towards me, mad-headed like sparrows run to a sparrow hawk . . . !

"I myself did not, could not understand. I only saw one: a big, brown piece, with brilliant eyes like the stars of a winter's night, with a waist narrower than that of the fierce wasps that suck the golden muscat grapes, with long, fine hands that loved not work . . .

"She knew it well, Nada, and left nought undone that could excite me. I could never, in her case, find the basilic herb, yet her dwelling-place was the humblest and smallest of huts. She affected letting it be found by ne'er-do-wells, real *pelados* in whose arms she swept by in the dance, but fixing on me all the while those great eyes of hers that were drinking up my soul, and laughing at me in mock challenge with her lips redder than the flower of the grenade.

"My father saw the game with ill will. It was not his intention, he wanted to leave me innumerable riches, to allow me to get stuck with a scamp of a girl nesting almost in a loft. He spoke severely to me about it; but all in vain, Nada. To him who loves reproaches are as oil that is thrown on the flames; the evil grows the more. He tried, unbeknown to me, to find me a wife among the richest maids of the valley. I remained as of stone. Should he insist, I retired, for fear of being lacking in respect to him.

"Yet, one day, the rumour went round that he was going to pledge my troth to Conception Zumaya, a young lady who, in Barcelona, had learned reading and fine manners from the nuns. She had vast riches under the sun, and people, ever as well informed as if they listened at the key holes, said that, through a secret fondness for me, she had refused Pedro Zuchar of Bielca, the young lawyer of Benascos, whose father had been one of the King's senators. All my friends congratulated me. And perhaps, out of vanity and tiredness, I might have let them do their will in the matter, and would today have been happy, with little children smiling at me in the valley, and boundless lands in the plains

to call my own, and my trunks full of brand new piastre pieces."

"Thou hast in truth nothing left, then?" interrupted Nada.

"Oh, yes, I have," said Ramon, grinding his teeth, "I have misery on my back and death in my heart."

As if he were choking, he opened wide, on his flat chest, the woolen shirt with turned-down collar, and proceeded:

"Yes, doubtless, I might have been happy, if the very day I intended to yield, I had not met La Paz, whose name means peace, but whose body is accursed. I was coming back from Alceuzar, in a *tartana,* just as it struck twelve noon, when I saw her by the bridge. She looked at me without a smile, which was unusual for her, and waved her hand, as if to say farewell. Ah, well, you cannot free the wall from the ivy that grows on it, nor a field from the dandelions that infest it. I risked breaking my neck, jumped down and ran to Paz. 'What's the matter?' I asked, and I must have looked whiter than a winter's dawn. 'Nothing,' said she, 'I was merely saying goodbye to you as to the others.' 'You are going away?' 'Yes, what matter?' 'Where are you going to?' 'Over there in France, where there are sure prouder gallants than in Spain, I think.' 'You must remain,' said I, seizing her fine, hot hands.

" 'Why stay on? In a while you will be the bridegroom of chaste Zumaya. Oh, I understand: a rich lad like you, who fears his father into the bargain, prefers the town dainties to rough country lasses. Fare thee well, friend! I'll see you perhaps again some day, grown fat and having reared many children.' She curved her supple haunches and put out her firm chest, and went on, in a tone of bitter humour, with just a touch of sadness to make my cup quite full: 'One cannot have everything, Ramon. To be a big, well reputed gentleman, you will have many troubles to weather. Take my advice and get it over quickly. You might perchance compromise yourself with La Paz Padilla, a fine lass maybe, but through her poverty designed for *pelados* and smugglers. Go! Go! Goodbye, little fellow!'

"Do you understand, Nada? I was digging my nails into the palms of my hands to prevent me strangling her. And

I felt I loved her too well to do her harm. I was suffering terribly from the sun that was scorching my back. And the girl's scent was going to my head, a scent of joy and death like the biting perfume of ripe hay that the scythe has cut down on the prairie. I shouted: 'You shall not go away! You know not what manner of places the cities be for girls such as you.' 'I have no advice to receive,' said she, 'I have not been brought up by a tyrannical father who beats his son as he beats his mules. Farewell!'

"She was drawing away, and I went mad. 'If you go, Paz, I'll follow!' This time, I heard her laughter that rang through the air like the clear, light noise of water tumbling from fall to fall on the rocks. She turned her head and cried back: 'Who will prevent you, little fellow? Not I, certes. The road is all the world's. And La Paz Padilla does not yet belong to anybody in the world.'

"Then, Nada, you will understand, doubtless, how things happened. I went home, trembling with fever. The chaplain from Eriste and relations I hardly knew were there. They embraced me, and my father said:

" 'I have decided that thou shalt be the husband of Conception Zumaya. The priest approves. That is enough.' I implored him: 'I am young yet, too young for the raising of a family . . .' The priest burst out laughing; I could only watch his fat belly flopping about on his knees.

" 'Ho, Ramon,' said he, 'try and be a good husband for a start. Children will come after, if it please God.'

" 'Art agreed?' asked my father. 'Give me till tomorrow to think about it . . .' 'That's reasonable,' said the parish priest, too saintly a man to doubt of human wisdom and obedience. 'One day more or less in such a business is neither here nor there; we are in no desperate hurry. Go, my son, and think about it, and keep sober, just drinking with your friends, thy father's health, and Conception's and, if any liquor be over, mine into the bargain.'

"I ran away like possessed and wandered about all day in search of Paz Padilla. She was not of your temporising kind. She was sure of herself; she had gone.

"You can guess what happened, Nada. Night came; it is a bad thing, night. One cannot see clearly. One cannot

see oneself. One is alone with one's desires and folly, and one loses oneself.

"The next morning, at dawn, when my father came to my room to fetch my answer, he found an empty bed that had not been slept in. Where was I? I was running hitherwards, where we are, on the road that is all the world's, wishing La Paz to belong to no one but me.

"As for happiness, that remained at Eriste, between my father, the chaplain and . . . Conception Zumaya.

"What happened thereafter, Nada? Terrible things. I went to Bordeaux, where La Paz had gone, one of these great harbours whose dens are the haunt of all the villains upon earth. As I had let everything go for her, I wanted to have her all for myself. But she wanted a Ramon who was rich, not a Ramon who was as poor as herself. She made a fool of me for a long, long time: hours that seemed like days, and days like months, and months like centuries. I lost all self-respect, Nada. I followed her from afar, like a beaten dog, nursing a love that was near unto hate, but biting not. I excused her: because she was more beautiful than ever, and that my desire for her was as that of a mad beast.

"Then suddenly, in the valley yonder, my father died. The chaplain wrote me that he was too good a man to have cursed me, but on his deathbed he had wept for the child in whom he had placed all his hopes. He implored me, if I had any respect for his memory, to return to the countryside. But sensual love kills all pity, Nada, and all religion, for it places us lower than the animals. I wrote not to the priest at all, but to Pedro Zuchar, the lawyer. And I must give him credit for this, that, though he wanted Conception for himself, he neglected nothing that might preserve me from shame and want. There are truly good men under the sun, Nada, and there must also be some absurdly mad folk who will not be thankful to them and listen to them.

"On my instructions, that I might dazzle the wench, he sold bit by bit all these rich lands that Pablo Nerin, the muleteer of Eriste, had amassed for his son.

"Without respite, I implored La Paz to come to the altar.

But she had gotten a taste for vice. She preferred a luxurious friend who ruins himself to a prudent husband who must be followed.

"One day I came back to Eriste, to sell the house wherein I had been born. 'What need to keep these old stones?' La Paz had asked. 'Do you think, when we are married, we should ever go back there? Why, people would despise thee for having La Paz on thine arm. Let others have that sad dwelling-place. I wager we will have one much gayer here.'

"I was only too pleased to believe her. But, when, banned by all my relations and old friends, I got back again, Nada, friends told me she was more than a comrade to Jean Chordas, an exciseman of the Landes, who had once fastened a quarrel on me for some peccadillo the French laws don't allow. Then, one night, coward-like, I took up a position near the man's house . . . and . . . I killed him."

Ramon rose, with hand raised in murdering gestures, eyes wide open, and the mouth, with heaving body, and the same mask of rage and horror his face had worn on the night of the crime. Nada, in high tension, was scratching the soil with his short, black fingers as with the claws of some loathsome beast.

"Afterwards?" he asked.

"Afterwards, Nada? Whoever will understand wenches? She loved me for a day, some days, a month perhaps . . . who knows? I know not, for the hours of joy and love are briefer than all others; they pass by as the lightning between the clouds. I had to fly from justice. She followed, into the hills of the Arriege, proud to have made a murderer of me. She used marvelous words. There was so much passion in her, Nada, that I sometimes ask myself whether I would not again take the life of a man to get the body of that woman.

"And then, one day, she had enough. She was tired of this life of fear and adventure, ever menaced by the gendarme and the judge. I suggested going to America, where there are fortunes to be made by bold lads. 'Too far,' said she, 'Come, let's go back to Eriste. People know nothing of the bad story there, and thou wilt get credit there and so

get out of the wood. I will get along by myself. When all is said and done, that is where one is best.' Understand me, Nada, I neither could nor would. Does a man go as a beggar where he has been king? Then, she fled. She must have gone by here, Nada, you have seen her! and you did not stop her!"

Nada had risen too, with a bad fever on him. His thick lips muttered:

"I could not know, Ramon. Think thou a moment. How could I know? . . . Ah, if I had but known!"

Ramon let his look wander over the amphitheatre of the hills now full of light.

"What am I to do?" he said.

He was feeling dreadfully tired of the fight, and the craving for forgetfulness was, at the moment, stronger in him than either hatred or love.

But Nada was drunk with the blood of the crime. His dim brain was peopled with bloody visions. In the silence the shepherd's voice rang out, "Kill!"

III

The Venta Hospitalet

Ramon Nerin took up his cape, rolled it and threw it over his shoulders. Then he searched his pocket, took out a few small coins and gave them to Nada, whose eyes twinkled. "Come," said he, "take your share. That way, so long as you are in these parts, you will be able to buy at Paco's a few lumps of white bread to tickle your hunger and a few draughts of spirits to keep out the cold of nights.

"Spring is on the way, brings you fine days that will become ever longer till the summer is here. And then, you will do as you have always done, and as all men do: you will lie in wait for the rare occasion, the chance that comes but seldom and lasts not. You will live of covetousness and regrets. Will I ever see you again? I doubt it. For your lot is cast on the summits, where the grass is his who passes by. In the temperate valleys, grazing grounds are dear, and I have none to offer you, having not so much as a

plot of land wherein to lay my bones, without owing that last refuge to the kindness of another."

Nada turned round in his short hands the white coins that shone brightly on the cracked parchment of his dark palms.

"My share, dost thou say? I have no right to spoils, Ramon, since I have done nothing to help thee."

Ramon looked at him with attentive surprise, as if he only realised in this instant how wide apart in race they were from one another.

"That is where you are mistaken, Nada. You have listened patiently. It is as if I had got rid forever of a fraction of my sorrow and left it with you. You know nothing of that sorrow of the men of the valley, who live in troops, for you live alone, strong in your indifference. We are weaker, despite our quicker ways, because our joys and pains cannot remain isolated. Listen, we are, at bottom, like the sheep that, when the storm comes, huddle round the rams and, when they get lost, try to hear the comforting tinkling of the bells or the sharp whistle of the shepherd."

The very thought of his sorrow filled him with apprehension that made him wax pale under the tan of his skin.

"And then, Nada, the world is very small for men. The measure of the earth becomes the measure of our acts. Since I have shed blood, yonder, on the other side of the hills, France is forbidden land to me, as even paradise on earth to our common ancestor; and ever through the fault of woman and at the instigation of the devil. Perhaps the valleys of my birth will be forbidden ground to me tomorrow, and you will see me come back, an outlaw, more of a wanderer than yourself, since I will have neither sheep nor goats, and may be glad to beg of the milk of your sheep."

Nada shook his head incredulously.

"Thou wilt not come back this road, unless it be that La Paz herself come through here."

"Would you tell me if she did?"

"I have sworn it, little brother."

The shepherd uttered a laugh that was both naïve and

cruel, then, with a play on the woman's name, concluded:

"But, get thee gone! So long as that wench is in this world, Ramon, thou mayest have La Paz, but thou wilt not have Peace, and that is certain."

Ramon then began the descent of the almost vertical cliff of calcareous rock that dips its base into the green waters of the Eserra and is seamed with the froth of the torrents. The sun beat fiercely on the white stone, where, in sinuous course, winds the path for man.

As he went further and further from the narrow plateau of Pena Blanca, Ramon was the object of attentive contemplation by Nada, whose eyes were accustomed to see vast distances. A penetrating sensation of heat possessed him, and his ears were gladdened by the sound of the falls and of the stream forcing its way through its strangled bed, making a roar like that one hears on putting one's ear to a big marine shell. His blood flowed more freely and heat and noise seemed to revivify life within him. It was as if his first youth were coming to life and singing aloud in the soul of Ramon.

At times he would stop, a cold sweat on his brow, his hand clenched on the rough surface of the cliff. He was thinking of the humiliation of coming back, dispossessed of all, among those who had known him rich.

But the breeze seemed to blow fresher and the noise of the waters to come up stronger, and Ramon thought:

"Let but peace come to me, and I will rebuild my life."

Then he started on his way again with firm and deliberate step. When he had crossed over to the left bank of the Eserra, he stopped and raised his head. Bent down from the ridge of the Pena Blanca like a miniature gargoyle, he could see a tiny black speck. And a piercing cry, like the *irritzina* of the Basque folk, reached his ear, distant and unreal. It was Nada's farewell.

Ramon waved his handkerchief of white cloth and pushed on, deeper into Upper Aragon.

He was pacing now immense slabs of blue and grey stone, very slippery, polished by the ice that carved out the Pyrenean range. He jumped over great bleached trunks, with blunted branches looking like the skeletons of

prehistoric monsters. And on either side of the torrent, there was a chaos of loose stones, the accumulated evidence of the winter avalanches. For these Spanish Pyrenees are not wooded as on the French side. The snows have no fixity; they are ever ready to slide down, furrowing the rough soil, cutting down the last trees that have obstinately stuck to their post despite a world's plot to destroy them; twice, they razed to the ground the modest refuge of the Hospitalet, causing many casualties.

At last, the river bed softened somewhat; grass showed itself more abundantly, and flowers began to appear, whose freshness seemed to defy the scorching air, heated by the burning breath of the desert.

About noon, Ramon arrived in the little plain, where the marshes are peopled with water snakes and paved with black, yellow-spotted salamanders. He wended his steps towards the Venta-Hospitalet, half inn, half barracks, where Carabineers and izard hunters fraternize, and where even notorious smugglers come now and then.

He pulled down his cap on his eyes, entered the open house and sat him down in a dark corner of the common room. He was alone there for an instant, and listened to the thousand voices of the valley and the sonorous sound of the big falls that slip out of Lake Gourgoutes.

Then he beat with his fist on the table to call the hostess.

"Have patience," shouted from the threshold a brigadier of Carabineers. "My comrades are on their rounds, and my wife has gone to town."

"So much the worse!" said Ramon.

"Never mind. I can serve you. What do you want?"

"Anything to crunch. A chunk of ham, a crust of bread and a glass of clear wine . . ."

"Fine!" said the soldier, coming into the room, "but have you hurt your eyes, or have you a bad conscience, that you seem to hide your face, my friend?"

"Neither the one nor the other, or maybe both, that depends."

"Bravely said for a diplomat. Discretion is daughter to the devil and sister to the angels. Do you come from France or from Spain?"

"From France."

"So much the better; but then, why fear us? Poor or rich, we are all of a breed, my lad."

Ramon made one more effort to repress himself, then he let himself go:

"You are right. Why keep on a mask which the first comer will tear off? Here, look. I am Ramon Nerin, friend, Ramon Nerin himself."

He threw his cap on the table.

"Ramon . . . rich Ramon . . .?" cried the astounded Carabineer.

"He who once was rich anyway," laughed Ramon, with a touch of bitterness, "but who this day will leave his last coins in your hands."

The soldier drew a stool to him, sat in front of Ramon and said roughly:

"So you burned yourself to the bone with *vie* to come back and dance on the ruins of your house?"

"Who speaks of dancing? Starve were the better word . . ."

"That's not true, my lad. You are coming back to the yard because the wench is back."

Ramon mastered himself and grumbled:

"What then? I paid a big enough price for her, I think, to have the right to keep her."

"I don't deny that, Ramon. But a woman who has no wish to be recaptured slips through your fingers like clear water. La Paz Padilla is a worthless wench, my lad, without wishing to offend you; but she has a head, a more practical head than you. You are no longer of much account for her, now that you are poor. For you are much poorer than she is; there is no doubt of that. You have, to gain your livelihood, only a pair of arms, whereas she . . ."

"What's that?" asked Ramon, getting ready to fly at the brigadier's throat.

"I . . . I beg your pardon. I meant nothing, my boy, absolutely nothing. He is a bold man who says the opposite to what a lover thinks. And to look for wisdom in a lover is a vainer occupation than for a blind man to seek the moon. That's the truth. So, Ramon, I will give you

to eat and drink as much as you choose—and more, as for a great gentleman, if your purse reaches to it. That is all I can do for you—unless some day, who knows? tomorrow, perhaps, you were to beg me for something else . . ."

"What?"

"Well, to let you cross the frontier again, without arresting you!"

Ramon hid his face in his hands. He felt as if the soldier had, at one blow severed all his muscles. His nerves were exposed; increased sensitiveness made the noise of the falls sound louder, like a heavy, continuous tremor, a mountain in the process of collapsing. And it appeared to him as if the whole world were collapsing on top of him.

When the man brought clear wine and salted mutton, he ate nothing but drank immoderately, paid his bill, picked up his cap and fled precipitately in the direction of Benascos.

He was crossing that extraordinary zone of the Eserra valley that presents so sharp a contrast between life and death. On the left bank the towering wall, almost perpendicular, but torn, furrowed, gnawed, of the Estiba Freda cliff. On the right bank, the forest brightened by running waters, dotted with small open spaces where, in the thick grass, a whole world of crocuses and ranunculi reared their beautiful heads. Ramon was following the happy bank, by that whimsical path that climbs mounds instead of turning them, shines like a golden ribbon in the sun and turns to silver when it ventures among the trees where the clinging parasite climbers were shaking wildly that day under the influence of the rich April sap.

Time was passing quickly, but not quickly enough, for it was hardly three when Ramon reached the Baths of Benascos, a monastery like fabric in the solitude of the valley. And the sun but marked five when he came to St. James' chapel, although he had, of expressed purpose, slackened his pace. Here the cultivated fields began. The valley broadened, roomy, breezy, fertile as a promised land. Every field, every garden showed signs of the serious, well rewarded effort of an industrious, prosperous race, an economical race withal.

And Ramon dared go no further. He crouched at the foot of a wall, between tufts of grass and spinous holly whereon climbed clematis and sweet-scented honeysuckle.

He was waiting for nightfall, for he felt ashamed at going through Benascos in the revealing daylight, and arriving at Eriste just at the time when honest folk get home to enjoy the comforting meal and their restful bed. He feared the inquisitive witnesses—malicious, or, what was worse yet, compassionate. For he had no other resource than to beg his bread, to sleep in ditches or in haylofts, like the poorest of men.

IV

The Night of Eriste

The sun had gone down a long time ago, Ramon was still hidden in his refuge, contemplating the wretched, tiny chapel of St. James. He stirred not, and listened for the slightest noise, as does a scout watching for an expected signal. In the distress of his mind he woke memories of former pious thoughts learned in the churches of La Huesca; he was waiting for the pealing of the Angelus by the church of Benascos, that sweet voice of the evening bells that sings to sad folk about peace and salvation. In his heart, he felt anxious because he could not hear it.

Suddenly he started. Yes, he remembered; April was in full swing last Sunday, round the French villages he had passed in his mad flight, he had seen palm branches in the hands of the women and children. He reckoned up the days since then. That was the explanation: the peaceful gloaming was a dying day in Holy Week. Perhaps the bells had already departed "on the wings of the angels" towards the City of St. Peter, thence to come back in the triumph of Easter resurrection. He lifted up to heaven his eyes moist with tears, and just then, afar off, the bells started.

"Can it be that the Lord heard me?" sighed Ramon, uncovering his head.

He got on the stony path again; a woodchopper happened to be passing.

"Good evening," said Ramon, "what day of the week is today, my friend?"

"Wednesday, at your service."

"Ah, that explains . . ."

"What?"

"Nothing. I thought I would reach the village too late to take part in Good Friday celebrations."

"True," said the man, " a fine strong fellow like you owes it to himself to carry the Cross."

"I am not seeking to evade it," said Ramon, "and believe me, my cross is a deal heavier than that of the others!"

He let the woodchopper forge ahead, and only started walking on when the sound of his footsteps had been dimmed by distance. The last mound had been surmounted and Benascos appeared in the darkness, revealed here and there by its twinkling lights.

Pulling his cap again over his eyes, he followed the walls of the Calle Mayor, a narrow, paved street flanked by massive but sordid houses whose doorways were adorned with ancient coats of arms, but the ground floor of which, the the habitation of mules, diffused an acrid smell of stables. He shuddered involuntarily as he passed the gaunt walls of the old prison, whose blocks stood out in the darkness, dotted with windows guarded by spiked railings. Here and there a feeble light issued from the smudgy windows of some saddler's shops, with blinds decorated with leathern water bags or head harness with woolen pompons or brass bells.

A few men passed by, greeting each other with a word. Nearly all still wore the local costume of Aragon. The round *bolero* or the waistcoat open on the red woolen shirt, the velvet knickers fastened above the knees to let the pants roll out below it, the grey or blue stockings, the rope *espadrillos,* the coloured kerchief over the head, and, but seldom, the flat hat. These men turned, mostly to try and recognise Ramon, who did not answer their greeting.

For he was wandering along in a brown study, bitten by the sight of all these things that had been part of his life. And he had to bite his lips to hold back a groan as that of a little child that is lost.

"Ho, friend! Go aside to let my old ass go by!" shouted a merry voice.

He was not quick enough to avoid being bumped by one of the sacks of meal that were hanging on either side of the donkey, bending under its overheavy burden.

"Good evening!" said the man.

"Good evening!" mumbled Ramon.

The miller accosted him without further ado and put his hand familiarly on his shoulder:

"Happen thou sleepest?"

"No, I'm awake."

"Whither away?"

"To Eriste."

"So am I. We can go together if you like." Ramon made no answer, but this was a persistent fellow. He started talking of the season, the spring that had come so early that year, of the corn and the barley and the groats and an infinity of commonplace things.

As they were passing the church they crossed in the shadow a couple dressed after the fashion of the cities.

"Who is that woman, and on what man's arm does she go?"

"That is Conception Zumaya and Pedro Zuchar, her husband; folk who have gold to the weight of these sacks that are breaking the back of my old donkey."

"Ah—" said the anguished Ramon.

"You know them?" asked the miller, struck with the agony in his voice.

"No—that is—yes, I heard speak of them, long ago."

The chatterbox bent down in confidential mood:

"They say she is none too happy and she wanted to marry a lad of Eriste who went to the devil. But she is rich and virtuous. And, which is the main thing, Pedro Zuchar, is happy."

Ramon shook his head and started chanting in a sorrow-laden voice, an old song of Aragon:

"L'occasion est chauve, chauve,
Et la fille et le garçon
Doivent l'empoigner par devant
Quand la gueuse les regarde.

Las! Souvent l'un d'eux s'attarde,
Et, plus tard, il est trop tard!
La vie est comme la roue du moulin:
Elle tourne, tourne, tourne,
Et disperse dans les airs,
Loin, loin, loin l'un de l'autre,
Les pauvres petits coeurs des hommes,
Ainsi que fait la roue du moulin
Des petites gouttes d'eau de la rivière!"

The miller blinked at Ramon, suspicion in his eye. The thought struck him this must be a madman; he stopped his ass and said hurriedly:

"Heavens! I was forgetting! Estaban gave me an errand to do for his wife, just go on—I'll surely catch up with you."

Ramon shrugged his shoulders and went on walking without saying a word.

Beyond the bridge his suffering waxed more acute.

Rich meadows spread out behind the occasional poplars by the side of the road, there Ramon had, in the days of his youth, romped after the lively mules that had made his father's fortune. With distended lungs he breathed in the natal air and the scent of that good soil of which Pablo Nerin had in his day acquired the best parts for his son. Every stem reminded him more sharply of the immensity of his ruin. There was not a milestone, not a hedge, not a low-roofed loft that did not shout out his shame to him.

But this tranquil air was peopled with evil influences. Instead of producing in him a better feeling, it revived in his soul the fatal fumes of his first and only love. Once more the craving took hold of him to find La Paz Padilla again, to take her in the face of everyone, in a mood of insulting defiance.

So long as he was treading the empty road, despite the tiredness that was cramping his muscles, he ranted feverishly in the pride of evil things. But when he reached the first houses of Eriste he became suddenly, startlingly conscious of his fall. So keen was the revelation of his wretchedness that, in a fit of cowardliness, he almost retraced his steps.

Then, without heed, he wandered, as if under hypnotic influence, along the measly little street that crosses the hamlet from end to end; the humble huts huddle up against each other and against the side of the mountain in a delightful and happy intimacy. He knew every wind of it, every stone, from the square in front of the church to the last cottages lost under the trees. At each corner he found memories awaiting him, like pilgrims looking upon the ex-votos on the walls of the chapels where they pilgrimed in the past.

He could not hold himself in, but ran to the centre of the village, to the great white house that overtopped all the others, where there was a niche with a blue draped Virgin crowned with golden lilies in front of which burned a tiny light.

There it was he had been born, there his father and his mother had died. It was the sacred cradle of a race he had sacrilegiously cast from him forever. He crossed his fingers and cracked them in a fit of utter despair, and murmured dully: "My God, oh my God!"

There was a light in the ground floor windows. Ramon approached them with cautious footsteps; he knelt on the rough floor and edged himself against the wall, just lifting his head sufficiently to have his eyes on a level with the marble slab of the only window the dining room possessed.

He looked inside.

In his father's very armchair, a man, with an honest, open face, was slumbering. One could hardly distinguish his features, but from his crown of white hair one could see he was an old man. Up against the table a youth was smiling to a woman nursing her child. The furniture was just the same as ever: the very places of it had not been altered. The newcomers had not changed the devotional figures hung on either side of the mantelpiece. Happiness had not deserted the sacred home: it had remained behind, shaping the invaders on the model of the founders who had left.

And it was this happiness he had left to others, that Ramon saw in bloom before his eyes like a triumphant April flower.

He murmured again:

"My God, my God."

Then he sank to the ground and fell to weeping, silently.

Unconscious of the drama outside, the man and the woman inside were laughing. By one of these cruel ironies of fate, the young mother's voice was suddenly lifted in song to lull the baby to sleep that had just left her breast. She was singing the very song of Aragon that had floated from Ramon's lips as he had, a while since, seen Conception Zumaya go by on the arm of Pedro Zuchar:

L'occasion est chauve, chauve,
Et la fille et le garçon
Doivent l'empoigner par devant
Quand la gueuse les regarde.
Las! Souvent, l'un d'eux s'attarde,
Et, plus tard, il est trop tard!
La vie est comme la roue du moulin:
Elle tourne, tourne, tourne,
Et disperse dans les airs,
Loin, loin, loin l'un de l'autre,
Les pauvres petits coeurs des hommes,
Ainsi que fait la roue du moulin
Des petites gouttes d'eau de la rivière!"

A noise proceeding from the upper end of the street drowned of a sudden the singer's voice; a group of young men with guitars and castagnettas rushed by. Ramon, pale and haggard, stood up on his hands, which threw his shadow on the lighted screen of the window. Startled by this sudden apparition, the newcomers stopped dead and seemed to be taking counsel together. Ramon tried to profit by their hesitation, to escape. But this appeared still more suspicious to the youths, and they promptly set out in pursuit.

Leaning against a half crumbled wall, his face hidden in his hands, Ramon awaited their coming.

His pursuers formed a circle around him and assumed a threatening attitude.

It was Roch Espejo, the eldest of the band, who spoke:

"What are you hiding yourself for? And why do you behave like a thief taken in the act?"

Ramon kept silent.

"Come, speak up and let's see your face!" exclaimed Juan Parez in his turn.

"I beseech you, pass by. On the relics of the saints I swear, I have not come to do you any ill."

"Neither do we wish to do you any ill," said Espejo.

Ramon muttered:

"The ill is on me, not in me. Pass on, I implore you, in the name of your fathers and your mothers, in the name of the Virgin and of the Christ."

But this obstinate desire to hide his identity simply irritated the villagers. Roch drew nearer to Ramon, seized his two hands and dragged them towards him with a rough movement. In the dim light of the stars they could see the emaciated features of the traveller.

"Ramon," cried Roch. "You . . . Ramon Nerin!"

"Have pity," stammered Ramon.

The circle had grown closer to him and they were all speaking at the same time. They were good lads, with warm hearts, and they had loved him well; they loved him well yet, although he had fallen lower than they who go along the roads begging oil for some hermit or holding up a tin image of the Holy Apostles to be kissed for a dime.

"Do you not recognise us, Ramon?"

"We are thy brothers, as before."

"Where have you sprung from? Have you eaten ought at least? You are so pale."

"Come and take something. No? But you must, Ramon, for we are your friends."

Ramon had started crying again, and they kept on repeating in pitiful unison:

"Poor, poor friend, how can you have managed to do it?"

"For a bad wench."

"For a worthless girl . . ."

"For a Paz Padilla, to become a murderer . . ."

On hearing this last word Ramon shuddered. He became livid. His mouth opened wide and his eyes dilated with terror.

"A murderer . . . you know it . . . who told you?"

"But all the world knows it, Ramon."

"French justice is looking for you."

"Not later than this day the *corregidor* was enquiring whether anybody had seen you around here."

"They are looking for me . . ."

"Alas, poor Ramon. You must fly."

"Fly?" repeated Ramon, as if the word had no meaning for him, "fly . . ."

His eyes sought out in the distance the home of his happy childhood. Feebly illumined by the tiny light, the Virgin, draped in blue and crowned with golden lilies, seemed to be stretching out her arms to him in that supreme welcome that promises forgiveness. And he shook his head with soft obstinacy:

"Fly . . . run away . . . oh, no. Stay on; expiate . . . die, if need be."

There was a unanimous outcry.

"Come, you—die? While that devilish wench runs the cabarets and the haylofts? At your age a man can make good," said Juan Parez.

"Or avenge himself," said Roch Espejo.

Ramon shook his head again.

"At my age, as at every other age, a man must expiate. When one has done father and mother to death, although the law can say nothing, when one has killed . . ."

The vision of the torture awaiting him brought on a wave of physical, abject fear. He put his hands to his neck, as if to defend himself against a threatened garrotting, and said in a madman's voice: "Oh no, not that . . ."

Some deep instinct made him seek out the issues. He thought of Nada, of the great lonely summits, that he could never bear to live his life amid their silence, alone with the memory of his crime. His hands fell limply back along his body.

"Run away . . . of what use? There never will be rest or truce or hope for me. Justice must be done."

Still, all the pride of a free man that remained in him rose in rebellion. Expiating was good, but it would have to be a voluntary expiation, freely, without being dragged through the crowd with handcuffs on, like a common jail-bird. But, how to do it?

Suddenly he recalled the stern words of the woodchopper, over there by the chapel of Saint James.

"A fine, strong fellow like you owes it to himself to carry the Cross."

He had a clear, imperative vision of an exemplary, voluntary humiliation. With sad resignation, he said:

"Listen. What I say is like the last wish of a dying man. Tomorrow, in the procession, I wish to carry the heaviest cross."

"But they will arrest you!" cried Juan Perez.

"No," retorted Ramon. "Not if you pledge your word that I will not seek to escape."

"And then . . .?" queried Roch Espejo.

The demoralisation of the others was steadily growing at sight of this trembling giant.

"And then—supposing I were to ask you to serve me right to the end, in vengeance . . . would you do it?"

"Yes," replied all the youths of Eriste as with one voice.

"Right. Then swear by your fathers and your mothers, by the Holy Trinity, that you will serve me to the end in this, my expiation. Roch, you will get the chaplain's consent for me to be given the supreme privilege of being the Imitator of Our Lord, to do it as never before was He imitated here . . ."

They were silent, as if in the grip of some formidable mystery.

"Have you sworn? . . . or do you abandon me?" asked Ramon in a voice so instinct with despair that they yielded to the suggestion.

"We swear."

"Thank you."

One would have said that an ineffable mercy had descended upon Ramon and was transfiguring him, banishing from his heart the memory of his early faults and the remorse of his crime.

"Let us embrace you," said Roch Espejo. Ramon's voice seemed to choke in his throat.

"Thank you, my good, my poor dear friends."

"Come; we will hide you till tomorrow," said Juan Perez. "Come."

"No," replied Ramon. "Leave me alone tonight—alone with God."

And he pushed on in the darkness, which, afar the moonshine was beginning to illuminate, while the frightened youths went back in silence up the deserted street, their hands clasping the strings of their guitars, that no sound might disturb the deep calm of this funeral night.

V

The Passion of Aragon

The bells had rung for the last time before Easter Day. A thick crowd poured through the narrow streets of Benascos to witness the procession of Holy Thursday. Men of ripe age and numberless youths had put on the traditional costumes of the Passion of Christ. Women, dressed in black, were awaiting the time to second their pious imitation.

In the vestry of the quaint church, by the porch heavily adorned with curious statues, a knot of strapping lads were surrounding the priest, who was still wearing his cassock.

"What is your wish, my children?" enquired the priest while beginning to lay out the sacerdotal vestments.

"Father," began Roch Espejo, "is it not true that never was the world so full of crime as in these troubled days, just after the nations' blood has flowed in torrents?"

"Very true," said the priest, "but that blood was spent right loyally. And the mercy of the Lord is infinite."

The young men looked anxiously at one another, and Juan Perez remarked gently:

"Surely. Yet there are daily, throughout the world, madmen who strike their neighbours, without the excuse of serving their King and country. Can we not save them, Father?"

The priest laid down the freshly starched white alb his feeble hands had been unfolding, and, shrugging his shoulders with an air of slow impotence, he said:

"Save them? Why, do we not pray daily for sinners? That is the limit of our power, for we cannot decide as to their salvation. However dear to us a criminal may be,

he must needs submit to the justice of men before appearing before the tribunal of God."

"And yet," insisted Roch Espejo, the while he fumbled with his rosary, "and yet it seemed to us that it would be proper this day to give a signal example of penitence. And we have come to offer it to you, Father."

"What kind, my good children?"

"We thought perhaps it might be pleasing to the Lord that a man should offer himself to endure that which the Christ suffered to redeem the faults of mankind . . ."

"Go on."

"And that then, one of those who bear the cross in the procession be willing to hang on the cross, like the Master, till the shades of evening fall."

The priest thought for a moment, and turning to the chaplain of Eriste who had just come in, he said in a solemn voice:

"It would be necessary that the man who was privileged to imitate the Lord be the most unsullied of our valleys. What say you, worthy Señor Igueldo?"

"That it matters not, since it is through suffering that he will seek redemption."

The priest seized the chaplain's arm:

"You know the man's name? Who is it?"

"Ramon Nerin."

"But there is a warrant out for his arrest."

"It is in your power, Father, to hold back the justice of man and to await till this evening the manifestation of the mercy or the sternness of the Lord."

The priest knelt on his stool and prayed deeply for a while. Then he rose.

"Do you, Señor Igueldo, confess this poor child, whilst I intercede with the *corregidor*."

The young men made the sign of the cross, they were very pale, as if they, themselves, were to be offered up to the expiatory torture.

Out of the church there issued an endless procession. Many coloured penitents, their hoods drawn on their heads, holding up extraordinary crucifixes whose bleeding wounds were made cruder by the sun; a mob of imitators in cloth

robes or white togas, crowned with thorns, trailing massive crosses along the stony way, as did the Master up the hill to Golgotha; crucified adepts with dolorous countenances, arms stretched out and bound to staves that bent their necks and tortured the small of their backs; emotional women, holding out at arm's length images of Saint Veronique, on which, on that day of days, that sublime sweat had taken the shape of the Divine Face; grave centurions, a trifle picturesque under their helmets of beaten iron and their variegated tunics, but impressed with the dignity of their office and holding their inoffensive lances inclined to the earth in token of mourning. The holy masquerade processed between a double hedge of bareheaded men and women kneeling in the dust: an ancient mystery play, curious rather than burlesque, moving despite its weird inaccuracies and happily avoiding the deadly slowness of funeral processions. For it is considered wrong, almost a sacrilege, to show too deep a sorrow at the death of the Saviour, who, though he died for mankind, was to come to life again in paschal glory to affirm the triumph on earth of divine goodness.

The appearance of Ramon Nerin had at first caused stupefaction. But when people saw that Carabineers looked on impassively, they began to doubt whether the story of the alleged crime were true. And whatever blame his earlier misdeeds had caused vanished in face of the exaggerated nature of the humiliation. He was clad in a white robe under which one could divine his almost naked body; he had not even kept his sandals and so genuine was the crown of thorns that encircled his brow that drops of blood were running slowly down his cheeks leaving thin carmine trails.

On his approach, the kneeling women would press to their bodies the frightened little ones, not with any intention of avoiding their coming into contact with him, but from a mother's protective instinct that tells her that her tenderness is the child's best safeguard against evil and aggressive fate.

Surely this man was the very incarnation of evil fate, this worst of sinners who condemned himself publicly to the cruelest atonement. Ramon Nerin seemed not to see them.

He walked at the head of the procession, just behind the priest with the clergy of the small neighbouring parishes and a few pious women draped in crape, he trailed an enormous cross, the extremity of which, pointed and hardened in slow fire left in the dust of the road a trail like those of the little brown vipers of the Eserra valley.

He was surrounded by the young men of Eriste whom he had besought to countenance his trial. And they held him up whenever he stumbled on a stone and gave him a sponge soaked in vinegar and water which he sucked with his parched lips.

At times he would stop, almost fainting. He had eaten nothing since the day before, when the brigadier at the Venta Hospitalet had so stingingly reproached him for coming back.

Then he would set out again, panting, with roaring breath, like a big bull tugging at the plow.

When the procession had got some distance from the town, it seemed to curve on itself in a desolate round space whence the houses could not be seen. The priest hoisted himself on to a glacial boulder and the people all knelt to hear him speak. He told them of remorseless shades wandering along the paths of purgatory before even they left this world, incapable of enjoying those simple pleasures that maintain the peace of the soul. He pointed to Ramon Nerin, bent under the burden of his enormous cross, and revealed to them that, for long, cruel hours, he was going to endure the martyrdom that Christ bore in that last stage of Calvary. With his fingers he gave the benediction, and he embraced the voluntary cross bearer. Then Ramon Nerin set out on his way once more.

Before the deeply impressed crowd, and followed by his silent guard, he toiled up an arid slope by an almost imperceptible goats' track. He stumbled at almost every step. He fell. And the guards raised him to his feet again. When he had reached a certain height, he let himself fall, being utterly exhausted. The people, in a fever of emotion, thought him dead. But he raised himself painfully and dragged himself upwards on hands and knees. The guards looked on in apparent indifference. One could guess the

extent of Ramon's sufferings, and how his flesh must bleed, as did that of the Nazarene, on contact with the roughness of the rock, bristling with the cutting blades of flint and the sharp points of rock crystal. At last they reached the summit. To the crowd they seemed quite small at the distance, like the little dolls of painted wax that, in some old churches, are used for the *via dolorosa* of the cross.

The people saw the young men dig a hole in the soil, lay Ramon on the cross and bind him tightly to the rough timber. When they nailed down the little plank that was in some measure to hold up his feet, the distant spectators had the illusion that nails were really being driven through his flesh; a great cry of horror and pity went up, and some women fainted.

The cross was raised in the air, it oscillated for a moment as a poplar shaken by the wind, then it stiffened and stood still, assumed enormous proportions and filled the green expanse of the southern sky.

The crowd, in a paroxysm of emotion, uttered another long cry that rose in great circles widening towards the summits. Then, following its clergy, the people dispersed slowly towards Benascos, like a human river in which the varnish gilt of the sacred emblems glittered at times like lightning.

At the foot of the cross, the guards, those faithful youths of Eriste, were playing at dice, to deceive their own anguish. Ramon was beginning to suffer from this vertical position, from the stretched out arms, the stiffened legs. He felt at odd moments as if his head were emptying, his blood all flowing down to his feet which he could not see. He suffered especially from the sun, that penetrated him in every part, sucking his strength by every pore. He tried painfully to look in front and around him, when the muffled talk of the young men rose in confused murmur. His thickened tongue clove to his parched palate, and he brought his eyelids down on eyes sore with the shine of the helmets. First his thoughts had been of God, then of Paz, then of Conception; back again to Paz. He had had to make an effort to catch up the thread of the prayers of atonement his subconscious voice was repeating within him, together with

words void of all sense, for he was the plaything of queer hallucinations that became every moment more unstable, disordered and contradictory. He heard the twang of guitars and the click of castagnettas and saw himself, with the plumed shawl on his head, in a whirl of many-coloured ribbons, dancing round with pretty girls. Then the music of the guitars died out and the girls dissolved like ghosts. There was only before him now a grotesque, whimsical figure, a flat-faced thing out of some hideous fantastic tale, shaking its hollow bones with the cracking of wood emptied of its sap.

Again he wandered, poor, ragged, on an endless road under a beating sun. He was thirsty, with that thirst which is crueler than any other torture. From the hills shining waters now rushing down. He flew towards them. But it was usless to run, for the stony way tore his feet to shreds. The distance never diminished. A woman appeared then who, turn about, wore the cynical expression of La Paz; or the gentle features of Conception. He held out his hands, cup shaped, to the *alcazaras* she held, whence oozed out icy water. But the water ran through the palms of his hands, and when he sought to touch it with his lips, the marvellous vase disappeared and there was nought there but an old hag with toothless gums and sightless eyes.

Again it would be a dwarf who danced on the bleak earth, a small black man, like Nada, the shepherd of the Pena Blanca. Suddenly the shepherd had disappeared and it was a brown bear of the hills, scratching the soil, digging a grave. And when the grave had been dug, deep and long, Ramon saw himself stretched out in it, his eyes closed, his lips pressed together, his hands crossed for the eternal prayer of death.

Yet the internal voice went on chanting prayers. Only it was no longer prayers of atonement. It was the office of the dying.

Little by little, awful blackness was settling on his spirit. His head swung right and left, seeking the illusory support of the shoulders, twisted with the weight of his body.

He tried to speak, but from his lips there only filtered through an almost imperceptible groan: "Drink!"

Roch Espejo dug the iron of his lance into the sponge and presented it to the bloodless lips. The crucified man's features livened as if he were awaking out of a long sleep.

"Courage!" said Juan Perez, his eyes full of tears. "Courage, Ramon. Your torture will soon be over. See the sun will soon go down behind the hills."

"Soon!" violently protested Roch Espejo. "It is now at once that this savagery must be stopped. Think of it . . . Christ was the Christ, yet in the third hour he was dead."

Ramon's voice fell heavily from the cross, so heavily that at first sound they all shuddered, as men do when they hear the spadefuls of earth clanking on a coffin.

"What matter the hours? Ah, what matter the hours, since you do not deliver me before—before the bells are back!"

Their shock was such that they thought they could not have understood aright.

"What do you say?" cried Jago of Leira. "In the name of Christ and all the saints, what do you say?"

"Not before the bells are back!"

And, in a feeble voice, Ramon murmured:

"Remember the night of Eriste . . . do you recall it? . . . Swear by your fathers and mothers and by the Holy Trinity, that you will serve me to the end of this my expiation and that, through you, I be given the supreme privilege of being the Imitator of Our Lord, to do it as never before was He imitated here. . . . You have sworn it."

They were silent, shaken by a wind of madness, not knowing where the atonement passed into sacrilege.

One last time the weakening voice reached to them, like the last peal of a funeral toll:

"Not before the bells are back."

An irresistible sleepiness came over him. His head sunk on his breast, and Ramon was silent.

Kneeling at the cross, almost done, the young men of Eriste in their turn chanted the office of the dying.

Later—five hours—Roch Espejo drew near to the cross and shouted:

"Ramon! Ramon! If there be still time, have mercy upon us! Free us from our oath!"

To get an answer, he passed the sponge once more against the lips of the Imitator.

They guessed rather than heard the adamant command: "Not till the bells are back."

After that they heard nothing but weak groans, like the feeble swish of a brook over the sand.

Ramon's eyes were closed.

When he opened them again he saw afar off, in the last glimmering of the gloaming, the little band that dwindled towards the round place where the procession had stopped.

What of life remained in him urged him to a last agony, almost a coward's act. He wanted to utter that great cry of "mercy" which the young men of Eriste had sought to draw from him with violent tears.

But his voice could not get beyond his throat. The guards vanished. And the man on the cross fancied he heard the Evil One singing in the midst of the rising darkness:

"L'occasion est chauve, chauve,
Et la fille et le garçon
Doivent l'empoigner par devant
Quand la gueuse les regarde.
Las! souvent, l'un d'eux s'attarde,
Et, plus tard, il est trop tard!"

Ramon Nerin let himself go, relaxing his muscles, loosening his jaws, leaving wide open the mouth where white teeth shone between the double line of purple lips.

Et, plus tard, il est trop tard!
Il est trop tard!

So Ramon Nerin prepared to die. For he knew he did not deserve a miracle and had no chance of surviving the days and nights of religious mourning that would drag their weary length till the bells were back.

Epilogue

On that summer's evening of 1920, when over a glass of old spirits, Don Inigo Vergara told us this tale that starts with an item of police court news and ends in a romantic story, I marvelled that he took us no further than the leaving of Ramon Nerin on the cross.

"My God," said our amiable host, "that would not be at all unlikely; these men of the upland valleys, who are violence and courage incarnate, tremble like children when confronted by a mystery of whatever kind. For them to watch a dying—soon to be dead—man, in a lonely and desolate place is a duty that would terrify such superstitious souls. So the tale might well end thus.

"But since you have a mania for giving tales—moral or immoral—a proper ending, I will try to satisfy you. Without guarantee of accuracy, however, for there are several versions, and legend has taken a hand in the game. They all speak of a miracle. Now I am a priest and a poet, so I have the most splendid faith in miracles. Yet it is established that in these days it is through the agency of man that the Lord works His miracles. I presume He feels that man is great enough to understand His suggestions and to act in wonderful fashion under His inspiration. But come, follow me."

And Don Inigo Vergara, leading us towards Eriste, proceeded:

"It is more or less acknowledged that, on the very evening when Ramon Nerin was nearly dying on the cross, La Paz Padilla was found, her legs broken, in the ravine below Rinero, where she had fallen by accident. It is known that since her return to the valley she had had intercourse with the most notorious smugglers of the countryside. Hence her resolute silence regarding the circumstances attending her fall. Had I been the least little bit romantically inclined, I could have given you a new chapter. Pray imitate my moderation. However that may be, thinking she was in danger of her life and not wishing the Devil to carry off her soul without giving him a fight for it, La Paz sent for the parish priest of Benascos. He refused her the absolution, owing to her being the cause of Ramon's damnation. She knew nothing of the passion of her former friend. When she learned of his self-imposed torture, and that one could not save him from death without exposing him to the worst vengeance of human justice, she confessed, to the great astonishment of everybody, that it was she and Ramon Nerin who had killed the French exciseman.

"I doubt whether the priest of Benascos believed this confession, but he took account of it. The *corregidor* came in person to receive the woman's dying deposition. She was then allowed to communicate. However, she did not die, but lived to a ripe old age in a convent at Sanagossa, where she greatly edified the nuns by her obedience and humility.

"As for Ramon Nerin, his descent from the cross took place at night by the light of torches. The young men of Eriste carried it out in presence of the clergy and the civil and military authorities—which, in our valleys does not amount to a very large number of officials.

"And Ramon survived his martyrdom. The doctors, who always try to adduce scientific reasons for everything, pretended that his two days fast had saved him from death. I don't know anything about that, but it sounds fairly reasonable.

"Ramon was ill for a long time; after such an experience one usually would be in real life and one certainly would be in a novel. When he recovered he refused to benefit by the confession of La Paz Padilla. But the King had obtained from the French a pardon for the alleged murderess and the affair was closed. Anyway it would have been unseemly to persecute people who had, as you will agree, richly paid for their sins.

"To cut a long story short, Ramon Nerin came of sound stock. He set to work again. Among breeders of mules he attained in middle age a great reputation. One could see him at every fair, accompanied by a little man, exceedingly ugly, who answered to the name of Nada, or Nadito. Ramon had bought back the paternal home and was reputed to give large sums to the churches and to poor wanderers.

"He never married. And when he died, it was learned that he had left all his possessions, houses and properties to the issue of Conception Zumaya and Pedro Zuchar, of Bielca, whose father had been a senator of the kingdom.

"I insist again that I do not guarantee the accuracy of this epilogue. I know of no living witnesses—yet, hold, there is evidence: two stones. Shall I show you the house of Ramon Nerin?"

Guided by Don Inigo Vergara, we climbed up the measly

little street in Eriste where on the fateful night, the young men had laid their trembling hands on the strings of their guitars.

The house was just as it had been described, in the tale. The tiny light was still burning, kept aglow by pious women, in front of the Virgin draped in blue and crowned with the golden lilies. On either side of the niche were two marble slabs, each adorned with the cypher of Christ surrounded by a crown of thorns. On their dull white surface one could read in deep red Roman letters, the words of the resurrection, Christ's words when he tore Lazarus from the tomb and ordered his bandages to be removed, the words that alone must be said to tear sinners out of their evil ways and perhaps to persuade men to forgive the sins that are atoned for.

On the left: *Lazare veni foras.*

On the right: *Solite eum et finite abire.*

"Rise, Lazarus."

"As for you, unbind him and let him go . . ."

THE CHILD WHO CAME BACK

By J. KESSEL

(From *La Nouvelle Revue Française*)

TWELVE men were digging a ditch.

It was a rainy autumn evening. In the sky, where daylight was still faintly glimmering, the moon showed a humid face. A damp breeze swished through the birch trees, which were wrapped already in night, across the fields and along the soft road. Far off, the little town cowered darkly in the shadows.

The silence of the dusk sank on the men who with slow motions thrust their shovels into the soft loam, cast up the moist earth and stooped with troubled eyes above the ditch which became larger every minute. Sometimes one of them, becoming dizzy, grew rigid, and greedily inhaled the evening air; or else gazed over the plain with the look of a beast at bay. Then the soldiers who watched the group, being anxious to return to the town for their meals, approached the man, and, with a mute brutality, pushed him with the butt ends of their muskets. But he did not turn around, and mechanically resumed his work.

A few steps away, against the muddy sloping, a broad-backed man sat smoking, holding a massive revolver on his knees. He had an idle air, entirely foreign to the scene. It was the executioner. His hands, which had dull nails and coarse knots, grasped rudely the arm of a child that was trembling and shaking violently.

He finished his cigarette, spat, looked at the little chap and shrugged his shoulders.

"Don't try to run away, fool," he said. "There's nothing to be done about it. And then you shouldn't leave your father at this moment. Have you no feeling for your family?"

The executioner looked at the soldiers and winked, but

the latter refused to laugh. Among the condemned there was a man who stopped digging, breathing heavily; for this one dug his own grave as well as that of his son. With a strident voice he cried, hysterically:

"You're not going to kill him? You know well that a lad doesn't bother about conspiracies. Oh, you bunch of . . ."

A blow of the musket right in the face stopped him. A red froth burst from his mouth and nose; he fell. At the sight of the blood, the eyes of the executioner, placid till now, became half closed and his lips quivered. He got up, pushed the boy towards the group, and said:

"The hole's deep enough . . ."

The condemned men stopped in their tracks, where the order surprised them, in the effort of work and life. And one could hear one of them sobbing. And another one muttered, with the ecstatic smile of a fool:

"Comrades, the light is dying—oh, look at the beautiful light."

Rapidly the soldiers lined them up in regular file, facing towards the fraternal grave that was yawning before them; as the child hesitated, a heavy fist threw him on his knees.

And the executioner methodically killed the condemned men, one after another, with a revolver shot in the nape of the neck. The bodies tumbled down and mingled with the disembowelled earth. When everything was over, the executioner left, with the taciturn soldiers, for the town that was still dark and silent.

II

Down there, in a one-story frame dwelling, an old woman and a young girl were sitting before a table. The darkness blotting out their faces left a hardly sufficient light to direct their movements, but they were in no hurry to light up, as, by a tacit understanding, they wanted to delay the moment, when each of them would read again on the other's face the ache that was strangling them.

The shadows were like a reprieve of their sorrow, and behind the veil, their frail voices could whip themselves to indifferent conversations.

Slowly they ate a sort of blackish gruel made out of oats, brown pudding, and herring—added for their taste. A few potatoes, in a wooden dish, attracting the last daylight, gleamed feebly.

"The days are getting shorter, don't you think so, Mama?" said the young girl.

"Perhaps, I don't know. I don't notice anything."

They became silent, their hearts aching.

They had not yet finished their dinner, when there was a knock at the door. Quickly, with an instinctive gesture, like frantic misers, the two women sought to hide the fruits and the skillet in which was left a little soup. Then they opened the door. A large, thin silhouette entered which they recognized in spite of the darkness.

It was Pelasgie, an old maid and poor cousin who, a few months ago, had lived in their house as housekeeper and servant girl at the same time. She had abruptly left one day, on the pretext that she did not want to be the charge of her relatives any more. In the little town, where, despite the Terror, a sharp curiosity was on the lookout, the event had produced a deep impression, the more so as Pelasgie was living very well and as into her withered and pinched face there had crept a new expression, a singular mixture of superiority, tension and unrest. It was assumed that she had embarked upon a secret venture or else that she had found the good graces of a wealthy man who had fallen in love with her manners and her education.

"Good evening, Irene Philippovna," said the old maid, with a hint of deference. "Good evening, little Olga."

They mumbled a few words of welcome, and the mother begged:

"Go into my room, I am taking the dishes away. I shall rejoin you soon."

She wanted to remain alone, not feeling the strength to speak, being full of the agony which was choking her since the evening when her husband and son had disappeared.

As they arrived upstairs, Pelasgie asked:

"Well, what's new, little girl?"

"Nothing—but it is already eight days now since Papa and Georges have been taken away."

"I have heard," said the old maid, "that they accused your father of receiving dangerous letters, and of having induced the little boy to deliver them."

Olga bit her lips to choke down a shiver, for behind the accusation of which Pelasgie spoke she had seen the mask of death.

In the ensuing silence, they heard the bolt grate down below, then a dull cry from the lips of Irene Philippovna. The young girl and Pelasgie went quickly downstairs, but they found the dining room empty. A noise of confused words came from the adjacent room, the door of which was half open. It was so utterly dark that they were unable to distinguish with whom Irene Philippovna was talking. The latter went out at once, frantically closed the door and planted herself in front of it as if to bar the passage.

"What's happened?" asked Pelasgie.

The mother answered with a voice that was low, raucous and savage:

"It's nothing, absolutely nothing. I am too nervous. A drunkard wanted to come in. That has given me a sort of nervous feeling. Good evening, Pelasgie. I am going to bed. Olga is also tired. Good night."

Without saying a word, the old maid kissed her relatives and went away.

Clinging to the door, Irene Philippovna heard her steps die away, then she pushed the bolt and whispered to the girl: "Now, quick— the light and a wet linen. Georges is here."

Olga came back with a lamp that was shaking in her hand and which she let fall, when she noticed, in the back of the room, her brother, huddled on an armchair. He was covered with dark purple stains; from the wet collar which was heavy with wine-colored clots, brown rivulets were rolling as from an inexhaustible lake. That came from the gaping neck which ceaselessly spouted a thick mass of blood.

Irene Philippovna gently washed the wound and murmured confused words, in which occurred, like a refrain, the lamentation: "A child—to do this to a child."

Olga threw herself down on her knees near the armchair, seized the hands of her brother and asked, sobbing:

"Georges, my little boy, my little one, what is it? What have they done to you?"

The child looked at her with haggard and haunted eyes, tried to speak, but a frightening, gargling sound came from his throat, while a scarlet froth stained his lips.

"My God, his tongue has been cut," wailed the young girl, "but Papa, where is he?"

Irene Philippovna made a gesture of despair; Olga closed her eyes in order not to see the face of the little one, but under her closed eye-lids, in spite of it, there spread out a fearful fresco: the execution, the awakening of the child among the still warm and blood-covered bodies, his return home in fever, blood and agony.

Paralyzed she looked on, as Irene Philippovna nursed her brother.

III

Pelasgie walked rapidly across the dark streets. From time to time she heard the stamping of the guard whose oaths were the only noise that recalled human life in the sleeping little town. But the old maid did not experience the fear which even the night seemed to hurl against the bolted houses and against the dark windows. She breathed, on the contrary, with a strange sensuous pleasure the atmosphere of this empty town upon which the queer cloud-veiled moon poured a tragic light, and her step hammered blithely the rough road.

She did not return home and, taking a street bordered with leafless birch trees, she directed her steps towards the old schoolhouse, a big building recently plastered with whitewash, and the black painted windows which did not let any light penetrate. This was the home of the Tche-ka.

A man guarded the entrance, idly resting his back against the wall. Pelasgie mumbled a few words to him and he let her pass. She went to the "information" office, and stepped into a little room littered with posters and photographs.

Here she directed human destinies every night.

As soon as she had seated herself in her office, the demeanor of the old maid changed. She drew back majestically her meager bust. One would have said that a ferocious light coming from the depths of her soul had modified her face and chiselled it into harsh outlines. In her eyes there suddenly burned a rigid ardor; her mouth was drawn out like a tense wire, her bony hands plunged into the scattered papers with the insane fever which the fingers of misers show when they handle gold pieces. And Pelasgie suddenly lost her old-maid awkwardness. In her office, where, as arbiter over life and death, she held in her hands the fate of men who did not know of her existence, the rigid silhouette took on something of the gloomy grandeur of an antique goddess of fate.

She remained with half-closed eyes, lost in the troubled rapture which each night the sense of her power gave her. It was not her task of informer with the Tche-ka that delighted her, but the well-being which it brought, the revenge which she secured against all of her life with her relatives, when she was a downtrodden servant girl. Always watching and waiting, she lived in a constant exaltation to which the struggle added a kind of repressed and sexual joy; and all human sentiment had become strangled in her, to make room for the greedy instinct of a huntress of men.

She began to classify her reports. As she finished this task, she called the Tche-kiste on guard.

"Tell Comrade Simeon that I wish to speak to him," she ordered.

"You may go in. The president has completed his questioning."

When Pelasgie presented herself in the office of the chief of the Tche-ka, a guard came out, dragging along an inert body with swollen face. In the room there was a slightly built man with thick neck, blood-shot eyes, and enormous hands.

"Another idiot who didn't want to talk," he said, shrugging his shoulders. "A little coffee, comrade?"

"I'll be delighted," said Pelasgie.

They settled themselves before the huge table of the

president, which was littered with papers and stained with ink, ashes and clotted blood. Comrade Simeon offered the old maid coffee, cream and white bread. She made her report with precision, method and lucidity, and then asked:

"Have the Silanines been executed—you know, father and son?"

"Yes, this evening, with list 16."

"I thought so," said Pelasgie. "I shall doubtless have new ones tomorrow. I need a man."

Comrade Simeon having approved it, they separated.

And until the moment when the dawn opened its cool eyes upon the town, the old maid and the president, each in his and her office, worked feverishly in the house, where silence and yet dull suffering reigned, and the cellars of which were filled with human specters shivering with agony.

Irene Philippovna and Olga were watching the entire night over the child which could not sleep and which, in the impotence in which it was unable to utter a word, put all of its agony into its eyes. When dawn came and life began to stir in the town, the mother said to the young girl:

"We need a doctor."

"Whom?" asked the girl.

There were five or six, but not one of them inspired any absolute confidence. Bolshevism had long since released them from professional secrecy; the hidden accusations had corrupted them like so many others. The two women hesitated a long time, consulting their discretion and their conscience. At last their choice fell on the oldest of them, an aged gentleman who had treated Irene Philippovna when she was still a child and whose honesty seemed more certain than his skill.

The young girl found him in the attic where he lived with his wife. Before the latter, Olga did not dare confess the motive of her visit; she told the doctor that she wanted him for her mother who was suffering from insomnia.

When the old doctor arrived in the room where the child was suffering, he did not understand anything, but, as he saw the fearful wound, he stopped and mumbled, dumbfounded:

"What's this? You have deceived me, Olga Nicolaevna."

The mother, with a few feverish words, told him the truth. While she was speaking, an animal terror distorted the face of the old man. His cheeks trembled, and sweat broke out on his bald head. He stuttered:

"I can't mix in this. It will mean death if anybody knows it. And they will know it. No, no, I am going."

"But please, Pavel Feodorovitch," implored Irene Philippovna, "at least look at him. As long as you are here, tell me what I am to do."

"No, I am going, I cannot . . ."

"Pavel Feodorovitch, a word, only a word," wailed the unhappy woman, clinging to him. "Hot compresses, is that?"

"I don't know. . . . Yes."

"He is now asleep. Give me something."

"Take this bottle of laudanum. I brought it here for you. A few drops at night. Now, good-bye, Irene Philippovna. Beg pardon, but you understand, it will mean death for me. . . . My wife is so old."

With shaking knees, and stammering excuses, he went out without having so much as glanced at the wounded child.

As he left, he met Pelasgie. She went on, and nothing on her face indicated the joy of the huntress who finds a series of tracks, but in her methodical brain there flashed this thought:

"He will be upon my lists tonight."

Upon the steps she noticed large pools of a reddish brown colour which the rain was unable to wash away, and she murmured:

"The execution last night, Irene, excitement, the doctor, the traces of blood. I don't need to go in . . ."

A few hours later, as she was on her way to the town, Olga found before the door a husky fellow in a leather vest who seized her by the shoulders, brutally made her whirl around, and cried:

"You can't pass any more, my beauty."

The young girl rushed back into the house, her knees trembling, and fell on the floor sobbing. She had no strength any more to fight; a strange fear veiled her eyes

and mind; she wailed with a childish voice that made her plaint still more dreadful.

"Mama, Mama!"

Irene Philippovna, seeing her prostrate, understood that the last hope was gone. In her tired breast she seemed to feel the slow and difficult movement of her heart. Olga said:

"There is a Tche-kiste on the steps, Mama. I can't go out any more. I am going mad."

"I must find out," said the mother.

She opened the door resolutely, gazed at the guard, trying to discover what the man could say. A certain intuition, born out of despair and her tenderness, guided her quest. Pity? No. . . . The blue, icy eyes had seen too many ravaged faces to feel any sentiment. Interest? . . . Without doubt. The mouth was greedy and the forehead low. Irene Philippovna spoke plainly, with low voice:

"Why are you here? If you tell me, you will have two big golden crosses."

The man looked sharply about and mumbled:

"Give them to me."

The mother took from the still unconscious Olga the sacred symbol, took hers off and held them out to the Tche-kiste. Then he explained, indifferently and briefly:

"It seems that you are keeping somebody who escaped. The chief will take him tonight. He will be taken to the hospital and after being treated, will be taken to the ditch."

The street, like the spokes of a huge wheel, turned before the eyes of Irene Philippovna; she leaned against the wall, suddenly weak. But the official pushed her back into the house, muttering: "You can't faint here."

Olga had painfully lifted herself and her haggard mouth uttered dreadful words.

"They will take him again. They want to nurse him. They will go to the hospital every day to get the news. . . . They will touch with their fingers the spots where the blood has not yet dried, like a beast that is being fattened for the butcher. And he will know. . . . He will soon go back the same road, he will again see the ditch, he will live once more the inhuman hours."

Irene Philippovna heard her girl with a grave attention. She did not seem touched by this litany which traced the martyrdom of her child in advance. One would have said, on the contrary, that she gave him courage, force, faith. And as Olga, exhausted, became silent, the mother approached her, caressed her hair with a slow gesture, and said, strangely serene:

"Don't be afraid, dear girl. They won't do you anything."

She sat down at the head of the bed, shaken by the echo of the noises and the lamentations that came to her. Upon her eyes the mother's look dwelled so luminously, so free of all unrest that it brought a relaxation upon the face of the wounded boy. She spoke to him, changed his dressing in order to refresh his burning wound, putting into her nursing something graver, larger and more beautiful than mother-love itself, something divine and terrible with the strength of tenderness.

And she followed every movement of the slowly sinking sun. When twilight showed its sad face at the windows of the room, she said with a tender cheerfulness:

"You must sleep, little one. The doctor has ordered it, and has given me a drink for you. I am going to prepare it for you."

She rose and poured out the entire bottle of laudanum into a cup. But before giving the child the deadly potion, a supreme weakness took possession of her, taking the form of a senseless hope. She walked through the room where Olga, her head resting in her hands, remained petrified, and she opened the door softly. The Tche-kiste was still there, smoking a cigarette. Then Irene Philippovna did not hesitate any longer.

She went back into the room of the little one, stooped over him, kissed his eyelids with a tenderness in which was all her infinite torture, and helped him to drink.

Then, carelessly, she awaited the arrival of the Tchekistes.

A BEAUTIFUL DAY

By JACQUES LACRETELLE

(From *Les Œuvres Libres*)

"SUPPOSE we hide the case under his napkin so as to give him a surprise?"

"No. I will take him to one side, give him the watch, and say to him: 'Henri, here is the present that grandmother and I give you on your twelfth birthday.'

"Don't you see? We mustn't treat the nice little fellow as a child. It angers him. I noticed that well last time."

The grandfather took a turn around the table, laid for luncheon, and inspected the arrangements. Suddenly he stopped and, pointing his finger, continued:

"Just like that mug! Why not give him a big glass?"

"Don't you recognise it? It's the mug which Louise used when she was a little girl. I thought it would interest him, and then he will see that we are thinking of his mother and that we still love her."

She pronounced these last words almost in a whisper with head turned aside. He answered nothing and continued his walk.

They were a little old pair who resembled each other curiously. They were of the same height and of an equal wanness; their features were wrinkle scarred, the look of their eyes age-misted. One would have said that the same hard usage had effaced all outward signs of their original character. At the same time, by a certain agitation, by a peculiar way of straightening the head, there was plainly discernible in her the habitual exercise of will power and a taste for fighting her way. He, on the contrary, placed each foot before the other carefully when he walked, his manner wise and absorbed, shaking his head methodically as though adding up an interminable account. Sometimes

he stopped, placed his hands up and down on either side of his face like blinders, then suddenly drew them together in front the better to restrict his vision.

She had taken the mug, was turning it in her fingers, and regarding the initials engraved on the metal:

"When Louise had her long illness and was scarcely able to take any nourishment it was in this that she took her meat jelly, do you remember? I can see her still leaning over this mug, her little face so pale, so pitifully thin . . ."

He made a sign with his head, blinked his eyes, and continued his walk around.

"Is it possible," she continued, looking at the mug in a sort of reverie, "that the being who hates us today and does everything in her power to torment us is that same child? Sometimes when I think of it I cannot believe that such a thing can be. All she thinks of is how to contrive something to make us suffer. For instance, why forbid us to meet Riquet at the station this morning?"

She replaced the mug with a glass. There was a moment of silence.

"What's this!" cried the grandfather. "You have put a cushion on his chair. Why, that is useless; he's taller than you, my dear."

"Oh, dear, let me arrange things as I understand them."

"I repeat that a boy doesn't like all these attentions which belittle him."

He had replied with a gentle obstinacy, lifting his hands symmetrically in his favorite gesture.

"A boy, a boy! He's a child—a child about whom no one bothers, who is deprived of all affection and even of all attention. When he comes here he must find the tenderness that his mother no longer gives him now that she has eyes only for that rotter."

"Above all, don't say such things before him!"

"And why? Do you believe his mother has any hesitancy about laughing at us and insulting us?"

"Without a doubt," he replied with a sigh, "but as for us, we must not imitate her. The last time when you told Henri that his stepfather had gone through bankruptcy and had just missed going to prison, he blushed and I could

easily see that it was unpleasant for him to hear such things. Today, I beg of you, to moderate."

She shrugged her shoulders brusquely and continued volubly:

"Yes, yes, always give in, accept everything, that's your method. If, when Louise left us, we had demanded that the courts give us the custody of our grandson, Riquet would not be brought up in the stage corridors of theaters by a worm-eaten impressario. He would be living with us and I should certainly know how to look out for his education in spite of my tenderness which you find so ridiculous."

"I didn't say that, my dear. Simply that it won't do to mingle Henri with the sorry things that have alienated us from our daughter. He is going to become a man and he will learn for himself to distinguish between what is honourable and what is unworthy. I have full confidence."

The grandfather had straightened his little form. His chin trembled. She looked at him and continued tenderly and humbly:

"Oh, I know it well, Antoine. I have been carried away. Pardon me. We are so unhappy and today I feel so nervous. It's nearly five months since we last saw him. I think of that. Isn't it criminal to inflict such a separation upon us?"

Her voice was broken. With her handkerchief she dabbed at her wet eyes. He took her two hands and squeezed them in his.

"Calm yourself. Today we will be happy, it will be a beautiful day, look . . ."

He addressed her with a grave tenderness and led her gently to the door wide open on the garden. On the terrace they stopped and lifted their heads. The sky was blue, pale and pure. There was not a cloud. The same expression of hope appeared in their squinting, jaded eyes. They kept hold of each other's hands and repeated gently, practically intermingling their voices: "A beautiful day."

They had the air of two jail cronies refreshed by the same narrow slit of daylight.

The house, only two stories high, was erected between two garden plots daintily laid out, that in front descended

slopingly to a road beyond which could be seen another parallel road, more gleaming and more sinuous, the Marne. The other garden was cut up into flower beds, separated from each other by a system of carefully raked little alleys. A thick clump of lilac bushes, backed up to the wall, was in bloom. In the distance, here and there, a factory chimney, a massive brick construction, sprouted from the countryside, bringing back to one the fact that the place was within the circle of the Paris suburbs. Some distance away a viaduct, which straddled the river at a great height, cut the view in two.

"I must visit the kitchen," said the grandmother. "I doubt whether Clothilde is succeeding with the sugar dessert."

Once alone he carefully descended the steps leading to the garden, approached the lilacs, and, his hands behind his back, breathed in slowly the perfume of the clumps. He appeared satisfied and stroked his little grey beard. Then he took a rake from beneath the steps and set himself to raking over an alley. At times he stopped and while he rested immobile his expression reflected a mixture of contentment and resignation. From time to time he leaned down to pull up a weed or turn over a stone. There was, in all his movements, a humility which loaned them grace. One would have adjudged him a rustic saint.

Voices were raised in the kitchen. The grandmother appeared at the window above the kitchen screen:

"What time is it, Antoine?" she cried. "C othilde's clock shows noon."

He drew his watch and shook his finger to show that she was wrong:

"Thirteen minutes to noon. Hold on, there is the express passing."

His finger was pointing in the direction of the viaduct. A short train, looking as though it had been varnished, slipped along the top and disappeared.

The grandmother quit the window and rejoined her husband in the garden.

"I did well to go into the kitchen," she said. "The cream was altogether too thin."

She wanted to replace her watch in her belt. Her fingers became mixed with the catch. She trembled and tugged at the chain in her impatience.

"More than a quarter of an hour," she said. "In a quarter of an hour he will be here."

"Don't work yourself up so, poor dear. You haven't stopped wearing yourself out all morning."

She took a long breath as though, really, she were very tired. Then she made an indifferent gesture and, pressing the arm of her husband energetically, she said sonorously, yet with more than a tinge of anguish:

"See here, Antoine, I ask for but one thing: to live a little time longer after Henri becomes free. Then he will have chosen his home; he will be established with us; and our last years will be the most beautiful of our life.

"For his mother does not love him," she continued, dully insistent. "If that were not the case, would she drag him, as she does, from hotel to hotel following the tours of her husband? Henri's happiness, his future, nothing at all counts since she fell stupidly in love with that man. Ah, without a doubt I wasn't always on the best of terms with Louise's first husband. But the poor boy loved his son and took care of him."

He listened to her, his expression that of a thinker and fixed on something far away. Suddenly he interrupted her:

"When I think of Henri's career, when I say to myself that this evil education will perhaps keep our grandson from becoming an honest man—ah! do you realize, I feel capable of anything—I feel capable of strangling that hound."

A rush of blood coloured his powerless bald head. His trembling fingers clenched as though for a menacing clutch. She saw all that poor show of force.

"Ah! Antoine, how you do love Riquet," and she pressed his hands tenderly in gratitude.

"Come on, let's wait for him at the gate," she added.

They mounted the steps and went through the house. The door of the kitchen was open. The cook, hearing their steps, raised her head. She was quite a strong girl, no

longer young, whose blue eyes and black bushy eyebrows gave her an air at the same time sensitive and rebellious.

"Well, Monsieur Henri won't be much longer now," she cried to them in her strong voice.

They smiled at her.

The garden before the house was basking in midday. The lawn, covered with bright green grass, gleamed in the sunlight. The two old people stopped on the threshold and set themselves obstinately to watching the entrance gate at the end of the garden. They no longer spoke. A long minute passed. With a sudden motion he drew out his watch and looked at the time. Then in a voice which was tranquil but which sounded false he said:

"What a beautiful day!"

She did not appear to hear him. Then with a brusque explosion of disquietude and fury:

"He won't come," she said, "I have a presentiment of it. They won't have sent him. Yes, that's it, it's Louise who has decided that at the last moment, for no reason at all, just in a spirit of spite. Ah, I know her well. As a child she was like that. She disobeyed me for the pleasure of spiting me without a bit of pity for the hurt she did me."

Her husband tried to calm her, but she would not let him speak.

"Yes. I know her better than you do. Why forbid us to go meet our boy this morning if not for the pleasure of withdrawing something from our joy?

" 'Henri will be at your house at noon. Useless to go to the station.'

"That's what she wrote, that stubborn, heartless child."

The little old woman, drawn up, trembling, seemed to dare an enemy to combat.

Suddenly she stopped short. Her arm remained suspended in a sure movement of instinct, she turned her face toward the road where, nevertheless, nothing was visible. A keen expression appeared on her face.

"There he is," she said rapidly.

And an instant later a boy followed by a woman appeared behind the bars of the gate.

He was tall but rather thin and without strength for,

one would have said, from the way in which he pushed open the gate, that the effort was almost too much for him. His face was round and, as he held it slightly hidden and as he was pale, it appeared thin and offered no outstanding trait.

To greet his grandparents his face was lifted. He was not homely, but his nonchalant manner was not at all attractive. His grandmother had run across the lawn and was holding him in a close embrace.

"Riquet, my Riquet . . ." she was saying between caresses.

He had responded at first to her kisses. After that he allowed her to continue without moving, slyly looking elsewhere. Then it was the turn of the grandfather who, with a grave, gentle gesture, took his grandson's head between his hands and kissed him on the forehead.

The woman who had accompanied the child was holding herself a bit in the background. She was gowned in a dress entirely black but very short and drawn tightly in at the waist. Her neck was bare; her face painted. At a glance the grandmother appeared to size up the woman's appearance for what it represented. At the same time she bowed graciously and said:

"Thank you for having brought our grandson. I hope it hasn't deprived you of your day off."

"Oh, no, Madame," the maid answered. "It happens that I have an aunt living at La Varenne whom I am going to see this afternoon, if Madame permits."

"Naturally," said the grandmother, "and you will return for him in time for the six o'clock train."

"Madame Louise told us to leave about four o'clock."

"But if you are going to La Varenne after lunch you will hardly have time to stop there," the grandmother said with a manner that was half that of a petitioner.

The chambermaid indulged in a conniving smile and directed her steps towards the kitchen.

"Riquet, how you have grown," cried the grandmother, throwing her arms about the child's neck. "Look, my arm isn't as long as yours. Do you know it's nearly six months since I saw you last. Have you thought about us a little?"

He answered by a mute affirmative.

"And your birthday has passed so far without a present from us. But we haven't forgotten it. Your grandfather is going to give it to you. Antoine . . ."

The grandfather brought out the case, opened it and placed it in the extended hand of the child. He thanked them, took the watch, examined it, and from between his long, curling lashes, shot a delighted glance at the two old people.

"That please you?" the grandmother asked instantly.

"Oh! yes . . . is it gold?"

"Certainly," said the grandfather. "It's a real man's watch."

Grasping the watch in his tightly closed fist, he went to them and gave them each a kiss.

The grandmother held him tightly and, patting him lovingly, began to question him.

"My darling, my darling, tell me everything you've done. Are you well installed at Marseilles? Have you a pretty room?"

He answered a bit annoyedly, allowing his arms to hang lazily at his sides. He didn't like Marseilles, he said, but at Nice, where they had spent a month, he had had a good time, as well as in Italy at San Remo at Rapallo.

He spoke slowly and without making a motion. His face remained immobile, his lips hardly moved. It was the grandmother who, eagerly watching the movement of his lips, furnished the mimicry for the recital. Her wrinkled old face, overflowing with warmth and love, furnished the pout for Marseilles, joyously greeted San Remo, and Italy and, nevertheless, under this joyous outburst, disquietude and sadness remained in the depths of her eyes.

The grandfather had stepped away two paces and was rubbing his hands together complacently and discreetly. The cook appeared in the doorway and, in the manner of one of the family, announced that luncheon was ready.

"To the table, to the table," cried the grandfather, clapping his hands.

"Riquet, take that seat here, facing the window, so that we can have a better look at you," said the grandmother upon entering the dining room.

The child, even though taking the designated place, shuddered a bit as though he disliked the light.

His face, thus exposed, struck one more forcibly with the immobility of its features. At no time did there appear the lively, ingenuous expressions which it is customary to see among children; nor was there the slightest shadow of timidity. He turned his head slowly and all in one block toward the person or thing which interested him, observed it for a long time, but without the slightest ripple of expression. Rarely and scarcely noticeable it was, though sometimes, by a slight frown about the eyes or by a glance slipped from between almost closed lids in an almost feminine manner, one might suspect that he had received an unpleasant or an agreeable impression.

"And your studies, Henri?" asked the grandfather, "how far have you gone? Do they interest you?"

The child, looking at him coldly, answered in a few words. He had spent three months at the lycée at Marseilles, then had followed correspondence courses.

"Are your professors satisfied? Have you received good marks?"

The slight hostile wrinkle appeared. He turned his head toward the platter which the servant was bringing. The grandfather was going to continue when, at an impatient sign from his wife, he desisted.

"And now," said she, "I hope you are going to remain in Paris. What are the plans of your mama?"

"Mama would like to stay, but she says we've got to leave soon."

"Is that so? So she can't do what she wants," the grandmother cried with a mixture of anger and irony. "Who prevents her then?"

The boy, leaning over his plate, ate greedily and said nothing. The grandmother continued after a moment:

"And . . . and is your stepfather nice to you? Your mother and he don't have disputes?"

At first he gave an affirmative sign. Then he bent his head completely, showing his badly combed hair, and held out his glass for something to drink. Serving him she noticed his hand.

"Why, Riquet, do you bite your nails?"

The line of discontent reappeared. The child tried to hide the ends of his fingers.

"Oh! How that hurts me," the grandmother said. "It's very ugly, Riquet—well, anyway," she added more gaily, "I don't want to scold you."

And to obtain his forgiveness, she caressed the chewed finger tips.

"Heavens, what have you there?" she went on, drawing out the end of an undershirt sleeve marked with green and red stripes, which she had seen at his wrist, "it's a horror. Where does that come from?"

"That was bought for me in Italy. The trunks had stayed behind at the hotel in Nice and then . . ."

He appeared embarrassed and did not finish the phrase.

"It's terrible," cried the grandmother. "Then you didn't have any linen?"

"We were able to reclaim our baggage when we returned."

She exchanged a long look with her husband. "What a life!" they were thinking. There were a few moments of silence and then the grandfather picked up the conversation with a forced gaiety:

"Tell me, Riquet, what is your best single recollection of the trip. You must have indulged in some pretty side rambles, and Italy is a beautiful country. Tell me a few of your impressions. What gave you the best time?"

The child, who was drinking with long swallows, did not reply at once and, his face half hidden by the glass, he regarded them one after the other.

"When I appeared in a comedy," he replied after a moment.

"When you appeared in a comedy?" the grandmother exclaimed raising her hands in surprise. "And where was that?"

"In a casino—but it was a real theatre just the same and a real play."

The grandmother almost allowed her hands to fall back on the table. She opened her mouth wide and asked mechanically, "What play?"

"A well known play which has been played in Paris. My

name was Charlie. I came on the stage three times and the third time I spoke lines that made the people laugh."

The grandmother stammered despondently:

"And you found pleasure in that?"

At this question the child changed his pose suddenly. He made a lordly gesture. Lines appeared on his cheeks. His eyes became brilliant. He wetted his lips. One felt that he was incapable of withholding his words:

"Ah! surely! When I first stepped on the stage I felt something very funny, I was contented, very contented, but at the same time my whole body trembled. I could see nothing but the electric lights at the edge of the stage. Fortunately the lady who, in the play, was my mother, held me close to her; otherwise I would not have been able to walk straight because of the light, and then after a moment I had gotten the habit and the audience gave me a lot of applause. After the performance some one told me that I would be able to make a lot of money later on if I wanted to."

His voice had taken on a special sonorousness. A gleam of sincerity and even a sort of poetry lighted up his glance. But his eyes having encountered the face of the grandmother who appeared horrified, the child stopped immediately, lowered his head, and resumed his mournful manner.

"And your mother allowed you to do this?" the grandmother asked feebly. "When she saw you on the stage did she say anything?"

"She stayed all the time in the wings. I saw her easily between my changes. After the first act she said I was too pale and she put more rouge on my cheeks."

The grandmother, hiding her face in her hands, stifled an indignant protest.

The luncheon continued. The grandmother questioned the child ceaselessly as much about himself as about his mother and his stepfather. She sought to pierce all the secrets of their life. The tone of her voice was pressing, sometimes bitter; but this keen curiosity seemed to be disarmed, and, when the child answered, the old lady's face, twisted with anxiety, was like the face of a blind man who hears described what he cannot see.

The grandfather seemed annoyed at these questions. From time to time he made discreet little signs to his wife. But she refused to obey him and, once, she lanced him a scorching glance. The grandfather lowered his head in confusion. The child surprised this scene, but he did not reveal that he had noticed anything and kept on slowly chewing.

"Riquet," said the grandfather as they were leaving the table, "do you want to go for a boat ride this afternoon?"

The grandmother intervened immediately.

"What an idea! You are not going to take him away from me. Am I not right, Riquet, you don't want to abandon your grandma?"

She had seated herself in a low chair and she drew him against herself as though fearful lest someone take him away.

"I am so happy to have you with me today, my Riquet! I have been thinking about it so long . . ."

Emotion made her voice tremble. Tears ran down the wrinkled cheeks. She did not wipe them away and seemed to feel a sort of joy in showing them to the child.

"But you mustn't be bored," she went on gaily. "Tell us what you would like to do."

The child unclosed his lips and looked as though he were about to express a wish.

"I don't know," he said at the end of a moment.

"And over here," said the grandfather, pointing with great pride to a bed of red flowers, "well, what have you to say about my garden?"

He held his grandson by the hand. The grandmother, who had rejoined them, was on the other side of the bed. They remained silent, lifting their heads toward the big trees of a neighbouring garden which were stirring a little. Although the sky was less blue than at midday, it was a beautiful day. In the sun-warmed air delicate odours and gentle murmurs entered like a hushed labour which made the soul dream. From the distance came a woman's cry of laughter. A man's voice countered this cry with a guffaw; and the first voice began to laugh still more beautifully; it was, perhaps, a couple passing in a boat on the river; and the

man finding amusement in frightening his companion, was rocking the boat.

The two old people tasted of these things in gentle quietude. Their pacified faces were inclined in the same way and showed no trace of desire. The grandmother had passed her arm about the neck of her grandson, nor did she stir.

The child, who received the caress of the same summer breaths and heard the same sounds, remained immobile as well. But one could divine that all sorts of secrets were stirring within him. His upper lip was drawn back with a slight crisping, and the two lines of tightly clamped teeth could be seen as though he had just bitten into a green fruit.

"Please, won't you tell us, Riquet, what you would like to do?"

He kept his silence. Nevertheless, a brief flame blazed in his eyes.

"Suppose we go and see the robbers' house," he demanded.

"The robbers' house? What do you mean?"

"The house where a band of thieves took refuge several years ago. The police besieged it, but the thieves defended themselves with rifles. The police had to tear down the walls."

"Who told you that story?" the grandmother demanded.

"It was Claire, coming down here on the train. She told me the house is very near here, under the viaduct. She has been there before."

"Oh, that is crazy!" cried the grandmother in a stifled voice, and she continued in a gentler tone:

"That house no longer exists, Riquet, or at least it was rebuilt a long time ago. You won't see anything—and besides, would it have given you pleasure to see the place where that horrible thing happened?"

"They held out two days. They fired sometimes from the windows and sometimes from the roof, and when they had no more ammunition they killed themselves, they didn't surrender."

Pretending to hide and aim his shot he mimicked the scene skilfully as though he had often thought about it.

The grandparents followed his motions with astonishment, vaguely fearful. But the grandfather winked reassuringly at his wife and said:

"Certainly, certainly, it's only natural, at his age they don't dream of anything but wounds and blows. His biceps are sprouting, he wants to use them."

"Riquet," he added, feeling the boy's arms, "shall we have a game of soccer? There is a football among your toys." The boy acquiesced, with a nod of the head.

"That's it," said the grandmother, happy that the boat trip had been laid aside. "Play here on the grass."

"On the grass!" protested the grandfather gently.

"Oh, your grass, any one would imagine that you think more of your grass than you do of Riquet."

She went to hunt for the football and returned to seat herself in an armchair on the edge of the lawn. In the meantime the goal placings had been marked by canes stuck in the ground. The grandfather took off his coat and they commenced play.

The boy was brutal, but he lacked skill. He kicked the ball so hard that he twisted himself about, but he failed to send it far. He appeared not to care for running and awaited the return of the ball, planted on his spindly legs which were bare to the knees. Opposite him, the grandfather, all of whose movements were exact, appeared almost the more agile of the two. He drew back several steps, raised his hands vertically on either side of his eyes to aim straight, then gave the ball a quick kick which had a good carry. He threw himself into the game with boyish ardor. His legs slightly bent, his grey eyebrows drawn together, he watched the movements of the child attentively, sometimes advancing to head off the attack, sometimes withdrawing prudently on his positions. The grandmother perceived signs of impatience on the child's part and greatly troubled, moved about nervously on her chair. Suddenly she had an idea. Just as the two players were disputing the ball at the garden's edge, she cried:

"Antoine, look out for your flowers!"

The grandfather turned his head and stopped. Then she continued quickly:

"Quick, Riquet, push the ball."

The child, taking advantage of this distraction, threw himself forward and succeeded in passing the ball between the two canes.

"Oh!" said the grandfather, with a look of reproach at his wife.

"Riquet has won, Riquet has won," she cried, applauding.

"But it was a trick," protested the old man piteously.

She shrugged her shoulders and drowned the voice of her husband:

"Bravo, Riquet, and now come and take a rest beside me."

They sat down. The grandfather panted a little and held his hand to his breast. But she did not notice him, bent, as she was, over her grandson upon whom she heaped flattery. The child, letting his arms hang between his legs, collected pebbles which he threw in front of him without purpose, and answered nothing.

"Oho!" said the grandfather after a time. "Here is a sky that doesn't tell me anything good.

"Nor that," he continued, as a swallow passed before them, just skimming the lawn.

A cold breath crossed the garden. The grandmother shivered. Immediately she drew the child to her to protect him from the same chill. Then large drops of rain fell. They hurried into the house.

The storm was a lasting one. It was a spring storm, broken by whirls of hail and flashes of lightning. They had first tried a game of charades, but the child had not appeared to enjoy it; and now all three sat at the window, sadly regarding the falling rain. The child pressed his forehead against the pane and hummed. His breath covered the glass with a troubled mist. Sometimes he clapped his hands because he saw big hailstones strike the lilac leaves and rebound.

The two old people watched him from time to time with the same worried air. "Providing he doesn't become bored," they were thinking.

"Riquet, would you like to read a book until the storm is over?" his grandmother asked.

Without turning, pressing his lips against the window, he pouted his refusal.

"I can give you books which would interest you, books in which adventures, battles have been imagined, you who like that sort of thing."

The child pouted again, then he said slowly:

"That's not the same thing, because the stories in those books are not true."

He started to hum again.

Outside, no doubt, a low hanging cloud covered the sky, for the window, half covered by the lilac bush, only lighted the room feebly. In that sudden obscurity, the silence and the lack of anything to do became still more tangible. The grandmother grimaced desperately. She drew the curtains up as though to obtain more light for the early darkening room.

"I have an idea, Riquet," she cried suddenly. "Go ahead and pass in review all the things that belong to you here. They are all lined up in that closet."

The child turned and allowed it to be seen that the idea pleased him. Immediately the grandmother ran to the closet and opened the two doors.

"Look, Riquet, look, all that is yours."

It was a tall closet with several shelves. It was filled with the presents that the grandparents had made to their grandson. Below were large cubic boxes, simple toys, a little carbine, a soldier suit, higher up, picture books and a postage stamp album. All the objects were exposed with care and in order.

The child had approached. He considered his property with visible satisfaction. He lifted several covers, took out a toy. The grandmother, smiling, guided him.

"Your toy theatre is up there, taken down and well wrapped up so that it can't be spoiled. Back there is the photographic outfit which we gave you last year."

It was plain that she had arranged these things and that often she took pleasure in handling them.

"Here," she went on, as the child continued his inspection, "is my corner. It is there that I place the objects I prize the most. In this box are my jewels, my purse is in

this red sack, and this notebook also is precious to me. It is a present which you made to me. Do you recognise it? Here is what is written on the cover: 'Drawings made by Riquet at eight years old and given to Grandma'."

Joy had returned to her face. She pressed against her the child, whose attention seemed drawn to the objects which she was showing. The grandfather, approving of the scene with a pleasant smile, walked up and down. He stopped an instant at the window, opened it and announced gaily that it was no longer raining. Then the grandmother proposed a walk. But the child refused.

"I would rather play with one of my toys," he said.

"Take one of your outdoor games and come out into the garden. Look! the sky is perfectly clear now."

"No-o-o—. I'd rather play here," he said, but in a way that seemed a combination of slyness and stubbornness.

His grandparents hastened to give in to him. He went over the closet, looked for a long time at the boxes, and finally picked out one of them.

"The little theatre," he said.

The grandfather, raising himself on tiptoes, reached the commandeered toy and gave it to him.

"I'll help you set it up, Riquet."

"No, no," he answered immediately, " I want to do it myself."

On his knees, he brought out the various pieces of the toy theatre, then the stage settings and the actors. The two old people followed his every movement with admiration. But the child seemed to be annoyed. He cast a sly glance at them and refrained from hurrying. After a moment he arose and, approaching them, he said wheedlingly:

"If you would only leave me here, alone! I will fix up everything! You will come back when it's ready and I will put on a play."

At the same time he kissed his grandmother's cheek. Moved by this show of affection, she held him in her arms. "Yes, Riquet, dear," she said, "we will do everything you want."

He slipped quickly from her hug, and, just as the grand-

parents were leaving the room, he said with admonishing forefinger lifted:

"Not until I call you."

In the vestibule the grandmother opened the kitchen door. Clothilde was there alone finishing her lunch.

"The chambermaid has gone already?" asked the grandmother.

"Huh, yes . . . as she was in a hurry."

"Why, certainly. She asked permission to visit her aunt at La Varenne."

"Oh, she didn't go that far," the cook replied ironically. "Her sweetheart was waiting for her at the corner of the next road and by this time they've had plenty of time to get into cover from the rain. Aha! I don't know if they're all like her in Paris, but she is certainly a real cut-up. And what I haven't heard about the house where she works and her employers!"

"What did she tell you?" the grandmother asked quickly.

"That all the time there were disputes between Monsieur and Madame Louise, and that there was never enough money, and, finally, that very peculiar persons frequented the house."

It was when she saw such a grief-stricken expression on her mistress' face that she tried to swallow her words.

"Anyway, nothing but lies. I shouldn't have repeated them to Madame. Every one knows that a bad girl is capable of making up lies about her employers."

The grandmother left the kitchen. She took her husband's arm and together they descended into the front garden. They walked slowly and were silent, but it was evident that they had been overwhelmed by what they had heard. Their eyes were lowered as though they were confronted by a shameful sight. After a period of silence the grandmother allowed one little sigh to escape her.

"Louise," she stammered, as though tapping the fountain head of her memories, "Louise, who was so proud . . ."

"And how terrible it is to think that our little boy lives amid such surroundings," she continued, "our little boy, who is so honest and straightforward."

She looked straight at her husband, searching for his

assent, but he was content with shaking his head, and anew the silence fell.

Their souls were centered in their grandson and, as they walked, all the scenes of the day in which he had taken part, were reënacted before their eyes. They recalled their anguish which had lasted up to the moment when they saw his face through the bars of the high gate. They saw him again at the table, speaking little and brightening only for the swift few moments when he could tell them how he had played in a comedy. Then as these images brought back their minds to the present moment, they raised their faces and looked about them. All around were traces of the storm. The grass appeared to have been chopped up. The flowers in the beds had been torn by the hail, the sand of the alleys was sloughing down into the ridiculous little mud holes. The grandfather cast a mournful glance over his garden. He leaned down to straighten a plant whose flower dragged in the mud. But the stem was broken. He sighed again, took his wife's arm, looked at the sky, and remarked with a sad shaking of his head:

"And we were hoping for a beautiful day . . ."

And it was then that she pressed close to her husband as though to admit that she, too, was suffering from the infinite deception.

They had walked around the house and now were in the garden beneath the sitting-room windows.

"Riquet must have finished his preparations," said the grandfather.

Noiselessly, and hidden by the lilacs, they approached and peeped into the room. A brightly painted little cardboard theatre was set up in the middle. Above the curtain could be seen a miniature mask of tragedy. The child was at the far end of the room with his back turned to the window. It was hard to distinguish his movements.

"What is he doing?" asked the grandmother. "Ah, now I see, he is looking for something in the closet. Now that he knows where the toys are he will go there as a matter of habit. Oh! God, how wonderful it would be if we could have him with us always!"

The grandfather looked too. Suddenly he appeared

alarmed, pressed forward for a closer look and shaded his eyes the better to see.

"He seems to be hiding. You would think he was preparing a surprise for us," the grandmother whispered again.

Suddenly she sprang back, startled. Eyes staring, mouth gaping, her features bathed in mute horror. Thus, without doubt, acts the creature which feels that the necessary stimulus for its heart beats is suddenly lacking.

The child was holding the red sack in his hands and, with movements which showed he was worried, but without a tremor, he was stealing.

TWO HEROES

By GEORGES LECHARTIER

(From *Le Journal Des Débats*)

THE weather was cold, of course, but exceptionally fine for a twenty-fourth of December.

After the storm of the last four days the heavy following swell gave the *France* a sort of rhythmic, balancing, soothing motion. Just above the masts the gulls hovered, like white silhouettes cut out in a blue sky, their flight adjusted so perfectly to the speed of our vessel that it seemed as if they hung motionless, suspended.

Before leaving the promenade deck to go upstairs to take tea with the captain, I stopped for a while to watch with the accrued interest one always gets after five monotonous days at sea, two ships without superstructure of any kind, two cruisers or torpedo boats. They would have been invisible except for the heavy smoke which curled into dark spirals and remained motionless until, at last, it seemed to trail on the water before vanishing, and for the foaming spray which shot from their bows, ploughing their course toward the south.

"Nice little beasts of prey, these torpedo boats . . . Watch them go! . . . Not half enough use was made of them in the war!"

Without turning round, I recognized the deep voice of Prince Walexinski, commander and later vice-admiral of the Northern Fleet during the war, now consulting engineer in a Colorado mining concern. Placed next to each other the first night at the captain's table, we had struck up an acquaintance—we were congenial, as he said in English—and we had been friends, since then, as one is on board ship. A great, lithe, square giant he was, his black beard shaped like a fan, his hands restless, his eyes clear like those of a sailor or cowboy used to looking out over vast, open spaces.

He was a man of forty-five, this *"Preence"* as the adorable Miss Watson, daughter of the taciturn steel king, called him. In the saloon, where he went but rarely, and in the smoking room, where he spent most of his time smoking incessantly his light tobacco cigarettes, he would sit for hours without saying a word. But when he did speak, his deep culture came to the fore, while his exceptionally brilliant and keen personal observations made him an irresistible conversationalist. He never spoke of the war nor of his country, however. I used to leave him, rather late in the evening, in the bar where, after having given a royal tip to the bartender, he would sit until morning, offering champagne, gambling, winning and losing with reckless indifference, quite as if he still had his huge estates in Ukraine.

The captain of the *France,* a literary connoisseur as well as a delightful talker, a hero of Dixmude, as a matter of fact, received us with that charming urbanity which since the war seems to be found only among old French families living on their estates and among seafarers. Miss Watson and her father were already there. The young girl was immensely thrilled by the smoke in the distance and babbled along with that undaunted assurance which, when it comes in small doses, gives added zest to the beauty of American girls, when they are young. "Will we pass right by them? Will we catch up with them? Why doesn't the deck steward get the betting started? Wouldn't it be glorious to pass between them and shout hello!"

The captain explained smilingly that the torpedo chasers were probably being tested for speed, and that we would probably cross their course when they were already back in Cherbourg casting anchor. He explained how dangerous these speed tests are and told of a terrible accident which took place about a month before, in the very same roads of Cherbourg, with the *Grenade.* The exhaust steam pipe had burst under the too great pressure and in four seconds the boiler room had filled with the scalding steam and of the eight literally boiled firemen only one was brought out alive—and in what condition! Bodies swollen and tumefied, eyes white and bulging, flesh puffed up and falling off

the bones, in pieces. A frightful accident, occurring far too frequently, always due to the same cause and yet impossible to prevent by the most careful calculations, just as no medicine, no surgery, can cure its effects.

"Hard to manage, and dangerous, even in peace," said Walexinski, "but even more dangerous in war. That reminds me . . ." he stopped suddenly and concluded abruptly: "But they certainly can go! Thoroughbreds of the sea, eh!"

"A story, a story, *please, Preence!* You must give us one! You owe it to these poor fellow passengers of yours who've told all their own stories and heard those of all the others, *Preence,* I beg you on my bended knee!" Miss Watson exclaimed, jumping up on the sofa where Walexinski was sitting. With her clasped hands and her fascinating bobbed head stretched out toward the prince, she was quite irresistible. Walexinski did not resist. With a nervous gesture he lit his fiftieth cigarette, and began.

It was in 1916, about this time of the year. I've spent many Christmases away from Russia and my people, but few have made such an impression on me as this one.

In order to make the story clearer, however, I must go back a little. In about the middle of October I was at Cronstadt, commander of the sea-going destroyer *Atoska,* and depressed and idle, being encircled by the Germans. Sturmer, who reflected the opinions of the Czarina's entourage, including Rasputin, a man of pro-German origin and leanings, was in power. In May he had replaced Sazonoff at the Foreign Office. He had played a rather suspicious rôle in stopping, suddenly, Broussiloff's triumphant offensive, in delaying Roumania's intervention and in sending reinforcements too late to King Ferdinand. He had had a liberal renegade named Protopoff, in the pay of Germany, appointed Minister of the Interior. For some days there had been talk of a similar nomination in the navy. Mutinies, promptly squelched, it is true, had already taken place at Odessa. In other words we began to scent, all over, a general odor of treason.

As I said, I was in Cronstadt, ready to leave at the first

signal. One morning I received word from the ministry. At three o'clock that same day I left the admiralty with my sailing orders in my pocket. I had been received by Admiral X., who had been my first chief after I left the naval academy, and who had always remained a sort of friend. The interview with him was brief; my orders were clear. In such moments one does not need many words. The admiral had asked me, first of all, looking me straight in the eye, "Captain, can you depend on your men?"

You see there had already been mutinies at Odessa. The question was therefore a natural one. I felt I could answer in the affirmative.

The admiral then gave me an envelope sealed with five seals, and added in a rather low voice, pronouncing each syllable clearly, "Captain, this must be delivered at once."

I glanced at the address. It was that of our ambassador in Paris. The admiral no doubt expected the look of surprise I was unable to conceal, for he explained briefly, "We can't send it by the pouch, which must bear the seal of the Foreign Office. Nor can we trust it to our Allies. The two last French and British mails were captured in the North Sea. If we were to send a special courier, he would probably be arrested at the frontier by Sturmer's police. The Northern Route is blocked by ice. The route through the Straits is impracticable. The *Atoska* is our fleetest destroyer and you are the man we feel we can count on most. Our Allies must be informed of what is going on here, and of the coming revolution. You have nine chances of failure, one of succeeding. If you see you are lost, blow up the ship. Again I ask you, are you sure of your men?"

Again I replied in the affirmative.

"And is everything in readiness? Is your steam up? Then leave tonight."

And then he took my hand, took it in a peculiar way, holding on to it and looking me straight in the eyes. I recognized the handshake, I read in his eyes the same anxiety which I had had, scarcely a week before, when I had sent one of my ensigns to carry instructions to Port Arthur, via China, at any cost—a death sentence.

As he left me the admiral said in a hushed voice, tense with emotion, "Thank you, Captain, for the Emperor—and for Russia." That was all.

As I left the admiralty, my first thought was that I would not have time to say good-bye to my people, who were at our country place, some few hours from Petersburg. During the last afternoon I decided, therefore, to take a carriage and drive around to say good-bye to some of the families I knew, but as was to be expected, everybody was still out of town. People usually come back late to Petersburg, and that year they stayed away longer than ever. The war and the uncertainties of the political situation kept our leading families on their estates.

I still remember my feeling, that peculiar sort of feeling which came over me during that last walk, while I went through the streets which I knew so well, and took the roads I had taken hundreds of times before. It seemed to me that the houses, the monuments, were new and different. I saw them with other eyes. They seemed—how shall I say?—more living, speaking, almost, than I had ever seen them before. I had read the names of the streets, the signs outside the shops, as if each word had had a deep and hidden meaning. I found myself repeating them as if it were a very important matter for me to know them by heart and carry away an exact recollection of them. I also took an amazing interest in what went on in the streets, in a group of officers who had already put on their winter coats, so long that they almost touched the ground. I found myself gazing at a priest whose long blond curls blew about in the wind, at a coachman from the Court with his cocked hat over his ear, stopping outside a wine shop, and at lights which it seemed to me I had never seen before, subtler, rarer, and never to be seen again in this same way—the light of the setting sun on the blue enamel of a church dome. I turned around quickly to look at the Nevski perspective, I was afraid it might have been changed. . . . For both things and life itself seem different, when we look at them with death standing back of us—and this no matter how courageous one may be.

I had few illusions as to the fate in store for us. To

cross the enemy lines, when I knew we would be signalled to the Germans as soon as we came within sight of the Swedish coast—this was one of those audacious attempts in which a person can succeed once, and lose his life in the ninety-nine other times. But it was not for me to argue, but to obey, and above all to act with all my will power, all my concentration.

I did not, therefore, let myself fall into what would indeed have been misplaced sentimentalism, and when I stepped into the tender which was to take me back to Cronstadt, I was only thinking of the last orders I would have to give, and of various details which must naturally be attended to when one weighs anchor on such short notice. In my mind's eye I reviewed my men, thirty-six in all, firemen and sailors, men who had already seen battle, and who, having been to sea ever since the beginning of the war, had not yet been contaminated by the revolutionary spirit which was already felt in the navy. Indeed, I had been right in saying that I could depend on them.

One of the men, only, worried me a bit—a man called Aksakof, who had been sent to me the day before with a bad service record. I knew he had been one of the crew of the *Alexandre I*, and had taken part in the Odessa mutinies. I admit I had not been pleased when he came. Haven't you, too, a proverb about the scabby sheep contaminating the whole flock? I hadn't seen the man yet. Rather unfavorably disposed toward him, from what I had heard, I determined to see him as soon as I got on board.

"Aksakof, Aksakof . . ." I kept repeating the name mechanically. Aside from being the name of a prominent author, it seemed to me the name was connected with something else, some rather recent event. Suddenly it came to me. Aksakof was the family name of Loula, my mother's old servant; how could I ever have forgotten it! And at once I remembered a story my people had told me about her the last time I was home. It is typical of our local customs and as it isn't long, I want to tell it. It will explain the rest of my story and throw a light on a curious phase of our peasant people's faith.

You probably know that our big families employing workers of all sorts on their estates, keep a sort of old people's home where their old servants end up their days. One day, therefore, old Loula came to my mother and said, "Bari, I want to retire. I am old, I have worked. My only son is a sailor. I have no one." My mother, after having said what one usually says under such circumstances, granted her wish. At the old people's home Loula met an old friend, a carpenter. Age had made him both avaricious and selfish. Kirikev, according to the rules of the place, had to let Loula have the best place by the stove, and the best food at table. He began to hate her, and make life miserable for her. Christmas came. As you know, Christmas and Easter are the big fête days in Russia, and our peasants outdo one another in enthusiasm. Those are the days of remorse and of public confessions before the church —real conversions often take place. Kirikev confessed, therefore, repented and wanted to turn over a new leaf. He had hated Loula, he set out to love her. He had made life miserable for her, now he wanted to make it pleasant for her. But how? He said to himself, "I'm not rich. I'm a carpenter. I'll work for her. I'll make her a coffin." The idea seems strange, here, but it was natural in Russia. Our peasants have no fear of death because they are taught that death opens the gates of heaven for them.

Kirikev spoke of his idea to Loula, who was delighted and had her measures taken right away. When the coffin was finished, she set about beautifying it. But Kirikev had found such happiness in making the coffin for her, that he said he would pay for all the trimmings himself. And for more than a week he cut out the angels and apostles on the sides, and once he walked more than ten miles alone in a driving snowstorm to buy adrinople in the nearest village. At last the coffin was finished; it was a real work of art. Loula kept it beside her, all the time, and invited all her friends to see it. And at last, when she felt she was about to die, she dressed herself carefully, lay down in the coffin and sent for the priest; she blessed Kirikev, blessed all those who were present, and ended by praying, "Lord, make my son, who is far away, be good to every-

body, like Kirikev was good to me, and may he always believe in Thee, so his soul will go to heaven!" And then she died happy.

Was my mutineer the son of old Loula? I wanted to find out at once, and as soon as I got on board, I sent for him.

My first impression was favorable: frank eyes and open features. A bit too self-confident, perhaps. I was used to sizing up men and saw at once that Aksakof might be carried away, perhaps, and get into trouble, and even stir up trouble, but that at bottom he was a good sort.

I had not been mistaken. He was the son of the old servant who had sent her last thought to him. I asked him as to the part he had played in the mutiny. Then I gave him a talking to and ended up, rather severely: "You understand. No more of that. You believe in religion?"

"Yes, Excellency."

"You know your religion bids you to do your duty and obey the Emperor."

As he was going away I spoke to him more mildly. I know that often a word of sympathy, or merely a more confidential tone, sometimes touches a man, and wins him over forever. I smiled and asked Aksakof: "What in the world made you take part in it?"

He replied ingenuously, looking me straight in the eyes, "To do like the others, Excellency." And he added, with a gleam of enjoyment in his frank eyes: "Because it was good fun, to tell you the truth. We put over a great stunt, we did."

"You were risking your life. You knew that, didn't you?"

"Of course. Or it wouldn't have been any fun."

There you have it in a nutshell. And it was the same way with most of our mutineers. Revolutionaries? Never! Children, big children, playing a joke on their superiors, equally worried if it fails or succeeds too well.

I was expressing this opinion a little later, at supper, in talking to my chief officer. But he did not share my views at all.

Fedor Fedossoievitch was a tall, almost thin youth, who wore a monocle. He had just graduated from the cadet school and belonged to one of the old noble families of Moscow. He had not been with me for more than a few weeks, and although he had been warmly recommended to me I admit I never cared for him much. He was too self-satisfied, he liked to hear himself talk, and as far as I could see, he was easily irritated. He was full of caste and school prejudice, haughty and exceedingly overbearing in his attitude to the men, as well as when on duty. He was too dictatorial to have real authority over his men and sufficiently sneering to make himself cordially hated. In other words he had few qualities of a chief and almost all the defects of one. Yet he had had good marks at school, and he was said to be courageous. I had made up my mind not to have any dealings with him, except in regard to service on board. As a matter of fact, this turned out to be a very simple matter. When there are only two officers on a ship, they can spend months, almost, without speaking and even without seeing each other, for when one is on the bridge the other is sleeping below.

As it seemed as if this might be our last meal together, I departed from my usual reserve. I also wished Fedossoievitch to know my idea of the officer's rôle, and I wanted to try, if possible, to induce him to live up to it. I have certain very decided notions on the subject and my experience has not proved that they are wrong. They are very simple, as a matter of fact, and may be reduced to this: Know your men individually and treat them as individuals and you will have, as they say, your men in hand. But if you treat them like a lot of sheep they will act like sheep, being carried away by all the impulses, the weaknesses and foibles of human or animal flocks. To my mind this is the foundation, the a b c of the officer, and I have found it out again and again. When I expressed the idea to Fedossoievitch, he burst out, at once, "Excuse me, but theories of this sort led to the revolts of Odessa. If, from the very beginning, the Government had taken things really in hand, everything would have been different. Weakness is really the cause of all violence and disorganization."

"A little firmness, only, was required," I said, "and a little more discernment in meting out punishment."

He interrupted me rather sharply. "Believe me, yours is a dangerous theory. When it comes to commanding—there is only one ideal: German discipline. That's the truth. You know Spencer's theory, that nature is merely a series of acquired or inherited habits. Obedience must become the sailor's real and only nature. Hold him down, break him, show the man from the very beginning that he is not the stronger and that he will not be the stronger and can never be the stronger. And if, after this, he still tries to be smart break his face with a shot as a warning to the others."

He had grown animated as he spoke. He realized it and stopped short. Then he continued slowly, closing his eyes and smiling a rather forced smile, "All this sentimentality, all this Tolstoi business, causes revolutions. Look at France, look at the revolution lurking around us. Don't you think that if the Czar had only listened to his Uncle Hegel's idea of discipline . . . that's what makes a country stable. But to get back to Aksakof, I've already warned him that I'll have my eye on him and that the first attempt to start trouble will be enough for me."

He twirled his moustache with an ominous smile. I felt that if I tried to plead Aksakof's cause any more, just then, I would set the licutenant even more up against him. I knew that Fedossoievitch was one of those obstinate characters that grow more and more set in their opinions the more you try to contradict them. I therefore broke off the conversation rather abruptly, making up my mind to take the question up again when occasion arose, as well as to intervene, if necessary. The occasion arose, as a matter of fact, not long after.

The first part of our trip was unexciting. The sea was rough and kept the men at their post all the time, so there was little time for all those petty annoyances which I feared Fedossoievitch would inflict on the men and which, in time of war, anger the men and bring out their ill will and even stir them to mutiny.

Several times I had noticed that the lieutenant seemed

unduly hard on Aksakof, not only in regard to the orders which he gave him, but in his whole tone and manner he was unbearable. He was unjustly harsh for a badly shined shoe, an unbuttoned button; in other words he seemed bent on taking advantage of every opportunity possible to an irritable officer to vent his bad humor on his subordinates. I began to find a change in Aksakof, too. Even in his dealings with me he was no longer frank, as in the beginning. If I spoke to him he answered my questions, but without showing any confidence. I felt him to be on his guard, hostile, stubborn.

But as I had not seen any sample of either insubordination on the part of the man, or of abuse of authority, on the part of the officer, I could not interfere.

It was not until we sighted the Swedish coast that the first clash, which I had foreseen and had hoped to avoid, took place. I only saw the end of the scene. But I found out, by making an immediate investigation, how it had occurred.

Fedossoievitch had ordered the men to prepare for inspection during the lunch hour. You know what inspection consists of. Every man must lay out under his hammock his kit, brushes, shoes, breeches, needles, thread, etc., so that the officer, passing by, may see that everything is in good order and that nothing is missing.

The men, furious at being called for inspection at that hour and irritated against Fedossoievitch, who showed himself too often in the forecastle, encroaching on the duties of the petty officers, received the order with loud cries and hisses, much louder than if there had been a real revolt. The petty officer reported the affair, as was his duty, to Fedossoievitch. The lieutenant decided to make a test case out of it.

When the time for inspection came, therefore, he dressed in full uniform and went to the men's quarters. He began inspection, reprimanding one, punishing another on the least pretext, and finally he came to Aksakof. He held up a spool without thread on it and a knife that was in bad condition. And immediately as was his habit, he fell into a cold rage.

"I knew nothing would be in order," he snapped, "I knew it. Always insubordinate. No order. Dirty. A rotten sailor, a rotten state of mind. Two days in irons for you, to begin with. Where is your kit?"

As the sailor bent down, slowly, a wicked gleam in his eye, to pick it up, the officer snapped, "Quicker than that, you brute!" And either carried away by rage, or else—as he explained it to me later, only wishing to turn the man's kitbag over with his foot and losing his balance by a sudden roll of the ship—his boot struck the sailor right in the face as he bent down to pick up the kitbag. It was then that I heard the clamor and went into the forecastle.

I saw the man get to his feet, and I still see his eyes and the expression in his face—no, no sculptor, no painter could ever render on canvas or cut with chisel the fiendish intensity of the furor, the ferocity of that look—that look of murder. Pale, with lips set, quivering, Aksakof was feeling in his belt for his knife. Fedossoievitch, on the other hand, without changing his position, without stepping back an inch, placed his hand over his revolver sheath which stuck and didn't open. It all happened in the twinkling of an eye, but just in time for me to interfere.

I tried to make my voice sound as if I had not seen anything, as if nothing unusual had taken place, and I called the lieutenant, "Mr. Fedossoievitch, please go up on the bridge and prepare to take a sight. It looks as though the fog is lifting. I'll continue the inspection."

The commonplace order had the effect I anticipated. Fedossoievitch, automatically, turned to me, snapped to attention, his fingers to his cap. Aksakof, seeing the lieutenant from behind only, hesitated, and this was enough to make him realize what he was doing. Fedossoievitch walked out, his body rigid, his head high. The terrible consequences I had foreseen were for the moment, at least, avoided.

While striking a subordinate is frowned upon in our army, our rules permit it. I could not, therefore, as far as Fedossoievitch was concerned, do anything but express my disapproval by words which, judging by his expression must have struck home. And after that I was very reserved

in my attitude to him. And Fedossoievitch, too, whether alarmed at the gravity of the incident, or really repentant, tried not to annoy the men with unnecessary details and did not show himself so often in the forecastle.

But now I was anxious in regard to Aksakof. Knowing the man I felt certain that his hatred, which had been gradually getting more and more violent, had reached a climax. I had every reason to believe that he would seize the first opportunity to avenge himself. I soon saw that my fears were not without foundation. One of the petty officers, a man who owed his advancement to me and whom I could trust absolutely, after asking to speak to me, hesitantly told me that Aksakof was trying to stir up a revolt and had already won over several sailors and gunners.

After thinking the matter over I decided not to say anything about it to Fedossoievitch. The danger was not yet imminent. I was afraid the lieutenant would interfere and I hoped to solve things without having recourse to anything but peaceful measures.

The future was to show that my attitude was not entirely wrong.

Protected by the fog we sped on as well as possible—there were a few symptoms of the insubordination extending to the engine room, but nothing serious or decisive occurred. And in this way we finally arrived, December twenty-fourth, exactly seven years ago, in the waters of Christiansand. By an amazing bit of good luck the Germans had not yet caught sight of us.

The last part, the most dangerous because the fog was lifting, was still left. I was about to give the order, "Full speed," when the chief engineer telephoned that some of the machinery had broken down and that it would take two hours to have it repaired. Although we were camouflaged, it was out of the question to try to make the repairs where we were, in full view. I looked, therefore, for shelter in one of the Norwegian fjords. When the repairs were completed I told the men I would let them off duty for the evening and the next day. I even authorized six of them to go on land and buy, for the Christmas celebrations, pine branches to dress up the icons.

In the evening, while everybody was working to decorate the forecastle, I sent for Aksakof. I had made up my mind to talk to him, again. But from the very first I found him sullen, hostile. Yet I had begun very gently, "Do you remember our first conversation on board, Aksakof? You haven't forgotten your promises, have you?"

He remained at attention, without answering.

"Tomorrow is Christmas. You said you were religious."

"Yes, Excellency."

"Do you remember your mother's last words, 'Lord, let my son, who is far away . . .' "

He interrupted me rather sharply, and a bit arrogantly, "Yes, Excellency."

I went on as if I had not heard him, " 'be always good, so that his soul may go to heaven'."

He was silent, now, and seemed embarrassed. I went on. "And you know what your religion teaches you, Aksakof. It is easy to be good to one's friends, that is what all heathens are. But we must love our enemies . . ."

He hesitated. And yet all arrogance had left him when he replied, in a low voice, scarcely audible, "I can't love the lieutenant, Excellency, no, I can't."

I did not wish to insist any more. I only added, "Tomorrow is Christmas, Aksakof. Think it over and take a resolve, for your mother's sake and for your own."

I stretched out my hand. But he wouldn't take it, he kept repeating, "I can't, Excellency, I can't."

The next day I scarcely recognized the men's quarters. With that simple taste which is so closely allied to art, they had completely transformed the narrow, oblong room and had made it look like a chapel. Garlands of green hung from the beams and met like a verdant dome over an improvised altar where ever so many candles were burning around the icons.

As soon as I came in I started reading the prayers aloud. You know that this is still done, in Russia, and on shipboard the captain takes the place of the priest. All the men replied. Then I read the text of the Gospel. They listened with that serious attention, that almost surprised attentiveness which, among humble people, shows the ten-

sion of their mind and characterizes their reverence. I then proposed that they sing our cantique to the dead, "Their Soul is in Heaven." They all joined in with me.

While we were singing I kept my eyes on Aksakof. I saw him get gradually closer. At first he had stayed to one side. Suddenly he got to his knees, back of the others, let his head fall on his hands, and began to sob.

When we had finished the last verse he was the first to make public confession according to our curious, ancient custom. He spoke in a loud voice, so that all could hear him.

"I am guilty of having hated Fedossoievitch. I am guilty of having wished his death . . . of having wanted to kill him . . ."

He had got that far when two sharp whistles suddenly sounded above, over our heads. In one minute everybody was on the bridge.

As soon as I had climbed up the iron ladder, Fedossoievitch came to me, showed me two wisps of smoke rising from the horizon which seemed to draw nearer to us.

The sky was clear and limpid, there was no wind, the sun was like gilded silver and the daylight of mellowed gold. The two wisps dragged along in heavy scrolls, without dissolving.

In a trice I realized that here were two enemy vessels, destroyers, probably. Later, I recognized them as such by their lack of height. The distance between the wisps of smoke indicated two destroyers, undoubtedly German, making straight for us. If we remained there we would certainly be discovered, surrounded and driven toward the coast in unequal battle and this, according to our orders, we were supposed to avoid at any cost. Happily our steam was up. There was no doubt about it. We had to leave at once.

One feels a powerful sensation when one knows that on the precision of each movement, of each order depend the life of the crew, one's own and the fate of the whole country. I remember having every nerve tense as I thought of all the weak points of our vessel, foreseeing the overheating of a piston, the unexpected rupture of one of those

tiny copper tubes which are so intricately interlaced, and form a sort of circulatory system carrying life, the formidable life of power, into the iron muscles of the terrible beast of war.

We soon saw that we had been sighted. The two wisps of smoke grew more dense, a sure sign that their speed was being increased. With the spyglass I could see they were two destroyers similar to the *Atoska* and of about the same tonnage. I saw also that they were changing their course, to the northward, so as to cut us off. I ordered full speed and the chase began.

I will not describe the feelings I felt—one must have lived through such minutes . . . For about an hour we felt we were gaining on the Germans. The smoke grew smaller, less visible and disappeared toward the horizon. I had turned around and was scanning the sea ahead of us when a prolonged whistle sounded in the boiler room, catching our attention, awakening our fears. At almost the same instant a cloud of steam broke out from the hatchway. In a moment I saw one fireman, and then another and finally all eight of them jump on deck where they stood staring at each other with wild eyes.

I understood that the unavoidable and yet expected accident had taken place, a steam pipe had burst. I realized that every moment made the rupture larger, the disaster more irremediable. The only order that could be given was the immediate closing of the valve between the break and the boiler. I saw Fedossoievitch, revolver in hand, ordering the men to go down below. But one of the men, an old one, shook his head and kept repeating, obstinately, "Shoot, Fedossoievitch, a ball here is better than being boiled alive below. You can only die once. You can only die once." Another refused, and still another, not a single one would go down to close the valve.

It was then that Fedor Fedossoievitch showed that he was capable of the same energy he demanded of others. He did a really noble thing.

Realizing that the men would not go down he seemed to hesitate, for about a second. I saw that he made an effort to overcome his repulsion. His fury vanished all of

a sudden. He slowly made the sign of the cross. And then, smiling, he turned to me, and with a supremely elegant salute, with one of those gestures whereby one recognizes race, he said in a firm voice: "For Russia . . . and as an example." And still smiling, without hesitating, without stepping back even an inch, he jumped over the iron balustrade and disappeared in the steam.

No one had had the time to intervene, and perhaps no one had thought of it. We stood there, full of anguish, realizing only the mad audacity of the act.

Just then we saw Aksakof, who had looked on in silence, take his jumper off and plunge it into a tub of water. Then, like the other, he made the sign of the cross and turned to me, too, and with the fresh, amused, boyish expression of our first interview—and after saluting me smartly, cried gaily, like a child who is about to play pranks on someone, "For the old woman's Christmas, Excellency! We must be good to everyone, mustn't we?"

And throwing his wet jumper over his head he disappeared also.

Those were frightful minutes. Our eyes remained glued to the dark hole from which the scalding steam poured, forgetting all other danger, all other peril than the terrible drama which was being enacted under our feet. We did not think of moving, of acting . . . we just waited.

At last, softly as a sort of sigh, the sinister whistling stopped. The steam still escaped, but more slowly, like the smoke from a dead fire. The valve had been closed. We were saved.

We rushed to the hatchway where Aksakof, his head still wrapped in the jumper, was climbing awkwardly on deck. We saw that he carried Fedossoievitch in his arms.

I rushed over to the lieutenant and found that his heart had stopped beating. His lungs had been scalded by the steam.

I left him. My immediate duty lay elsewhere. And at once I had to turn myself to the task of ventilating the boiler room, of repairing the pipe, of getting up steam again.

What else shall I tell you? The chase began again.

How we managed to get through the enemy's lines, how the German patrol, taking us at first for one of their own, showered on us, after they recognized us, a rain of fire and grapeshot, which destroyed one of our smoke stacks and killed two men, how finally we managed to get into the zone protected by the British, where the pursuit ceased, all that I scarcely realize, even today. Suffice it to say that that same night we were at Newcastle and that the envelope for the Minister was delivered by me into the hands of the person it was addressed to.

As we remained silent, the captain remarked, lighting a cigarette, "Isn't that a fine example, gentlemen, of what faith can do when people really believe? And in our days of pacifism and anarchy it is interesting to see it find expression in action, give rise to virtues, sacrifices and devotion——"

Our cigarettes had gone out. We were silent a moment. As she rose, Miss Watson exclaimed, "And what about Aksakof? Did you have him decorated?"

The prince replied, a touch of sadness in his voice, "Aksakof? He died two weeks later—killed by the same ball which went into my shoulder, and which is still there."

And as he rose, he remarked, with his broad smile, as he rubbed his shoulder, "And an excellent barometer it is, too. I would recommend it to you."

MOROCCAN SPRING

By R. H. LENORMAND

Author of "The Devourer of Dreams," "The Simoun," etc.

THE house Colonel Green had rented lay in among the gardens. When you've traveled along the Moroccan coast for days at a stretch, sighting nothing but sand, water and hulls of wrecked ships pitched sidewise and bulging rusty flanks in the waves or rising bolt upright as if they had died at their post, ready to crash into the dunes, you learn to appreciate the Saffi gardens.

The seawind blows through the desolate valley they carpet and the sirocco covers them with reddish dust—but they are gardens, just the same. There are hedges of cacti, little fields of mais, pomegranate and mulberry trees and here and there a palm tree's rare fan. It's pleasant in the gardens at noon. You see camels trudging above, along the ochre tracks that wind up the flanks of the *combe;* you watch, so to speak, the terraced city's century-old slumber.

Colonel Green was one of those old, yellowed and withered officers of the Indian Army who, after thirty years' service, travel around the world in search of a healthy climate. He had discovered Saffi during a cruise and the place had charmed him. He made up his mind to spend a winter there, sometime, with his daughter and the old Cingalese *ayah* who had brought her up.

And on a November morning the three strangers were sitting on their baggage in the light bark that carried passengers across the sandbar.

The sea was mild, that day. It did not foam, nor froth, merely heaved and swelled its moving green back between the rocks of the narrows. Ten ragged Moroccans rose as a man, plunged their oars in the water and dropped down into their seats with a sort of rhythmical groan. Now and then they exhaled a sad *ha . . . ha . . . ha. . .* A black

pilot, in the stern, steered with an oar trailing in the water and kept urging the men on with an incessant *"siet . . . siet . . . siet!"* Groans and efforts redoubled as the boat passed between the protruding cliffs. At last the party landed safely at the narrow beach. While the bark was being moored the oarsmen swarmed around the travelers, wading in the shallow waves that ebbed out with a soft hiss.

From a cleft above, a woman, crouched like a delicate mauve bird, watched the scene.

The newcomers settled down quickly. A few hangings, a couple of steamer chairs were the only additions they made to the furniture of the little house. As cook they hired Amram, a Jew from the Mellah. He spoke a sort of hypocritically obsequious English he had learned in Devonshire.

He had been on the beach when they landed and had protected the new arrivals against the rapacity of the carriers. He had shown them the way to the consulate, through the town, and had finally offered his services. Old, pliant, he seemed to try to imitate the manners of a clergyman, as if, by adding a sort of smooth obsequiousness to his naturally fawning manner he expected to convey an impression of unimpeachable tact and dignity.

An Englishwoman is at home almost everywhere. Miss Green was not of a romantic temperament. Like most of her compatriots living in exile among Moslems she had very definite notions as to her duties to the natives. These young golden-haired hygienists seem to imagine that Islam, full of sores and pestilence, has lain there for centuries waiting for them to come.

She began at once to explore the windings of the Mellah, jumping over mud pools and pools of green, stagnant water and petting beautiful, bleary-eyed children.

A fourteen-year-old youngster started to speak French to her. He had a roguish look, his chest was bare and two dark curls fell at his temples. He asked for a penny. A coating of mud covered his legs.

"Why don't you wash?" she asked.

"Wash?" he repeated, "what for?"

"What for? Don't you ever wash?"

"Once a month."

"How dirty your sheets must be!"

"Why *non!* I them wash twice a year!"

The Moroccans did not take kindly to her. One day she scolded some people because they let a baby whose face was infested with smallpox ride around on a donkey. They replied insultingly and pushed her away roughly. And in the upper part of the town there was a woman who absolutely refused to countenance any washing tentatives. With her large handsome body, brown as a nut, topped off with a dark scarred face where one eye was missing and the other had a glassy stare, she barricaded her door and broke into curses whenever Miss Green passed.

The latter soon realised that the only relations possible with the natives had to be on a financial basis. For fifty centimes a week Youssef, the little Jew with the black curls, agreed to scour the worst dirt off his legs. The children let her clean their sores with boric water provided they clutched the price of the operation in their little fists.

After dinner, in the dusty arbour outside the house, Ellen would describe the events of the day.

"I don't understand these people at all," she said. "They know I want to help them and yet they seem to hate me. Why is it?"

The colonel was not the sort of man to throw any light on native psychology. During his thirty years' service he had accumulated stocks of impersonal, concrete information, like a guide. He could define, describe and locate an amazing number of thoughts and places. But he never gave his auditors the impression of having seen them. It was as if the splendours of the Orient had been unfolded in vain before his unseeing eyes. If the secret of the universe had been revealed to him he would have told his daughter about it, in the evening, in the same even voice that he explained about aloe plantations or the peculiarities of hay fever.

One evening, in the spring, Miss Green was going home feeling rather discouraged.

She had just met in one of the vaulted streets of the upper city, four Jews dressed in tattered blue garments. Their hair hung uncouth over their shoulders and they led each other by the hand, one following the other—blind all four.

She felt her own pettiness in comparison with the grandeur of such misery.

As she was about to leave the city walls she heard muffled sounds come from out of a neighbouring alley. The jingling music was broken by shouts and screams and thick lust-filled voices. Somewhere, beneath her very feet, underground, raged a wild orgy. An unreasoning terror seized her, she started running toward the gate.

And now, from a yellowish mound she watched the setting sun cast a copper sheen over the old Portuguese fort. The air was damp and the blurred sky foreshadowed southerly winds. At her feet lay a dummy which the soldiers aimed at in their target practice.

Youssef came out of a nearby café where he drank up the money Miss Green gave him.

"Big feast tonight," he called out in his hoarse voice. "The marabout, he back."

"What marabout?"

"Sidi Abdallah. Great Moslem saint. He go on pilgrimage through whole country. Many Moroccans go with him. You see them, going home, down by the gate, by the sea."

She left him without answering. But instead of going straight down through the gardens, she made a turn by the beach. The noise of the crowd attracted her. All Saffi was there. Boatmen with coal sacks on their heads, Moors in brownish *djellabas,* children naked except for a shirt cut low around the neck, negroes with wild, excited eyes surrounded the marabout and his followers grouped at the foot of the ramparts. The marabout's face was white, horribly drawn, and the perspiration streamed down his body. He danced and juggled with an ebony ball, his hair darting around about like a black flame as he moved. The pilgrims tried to copy their leader's movements and marked time with guttural cries, fragments of religious chants. Some beat tambourines on their ears, others indulged in the Arabian flute as in wine. Others, their heads covered with green turbans, carried huge silk banners striped in red and yellow, burned incense, sprinkled the crowd with orange water. The most fanatic among them, with bared chests and hanging hair kept slashing their arms with their sabres. Miss

Green noticed one man, in particular, who whirled around as on a pivot, writhing and digging into his sides. His face was shot with smallpox and his eyes stared out, space-devouring.

Blood ran with sweat. It was like watching mad beasts in a cage.

The sight made Miss Green feel faint. She had to go and sit down, a little farther off, on the beach.

At dinner she described the scene to her father.

"A marabout," said the old man reflectively, "is a man who conquers the passions of the flesh in order to become one with Allah. . . . He falls into trances and pierces the secrets of the intangible world. They say he can make even the forces of nature obey him." A moment later he added "A marabout is also a bird with no feathers on its neck."

They left the table and the *ayah* served linden tea in the arbour. The colonel read a book on Islam, by the light of his portable lamp.

Within the city walls the feasting continued and the first gusts of the sirocco swept its loud clamours into space.

As she went out, a couple of days later, Miss Green saw a man sitting on the edge of the dusty road opposite the house. She recognised the fanatic with the pocked face she had seen with the marabout. He sat motionless, his long hair blanched by ashes, a chaplet in his hands. He seemed lost in prayer.

He did not seem to see her.

When she came back the man was still there. At lunch-time she pointed him out to her father.

"I've already noticed him," said the old soldier.

"What do you think he wants?"

"Alms, probably. Being a believer, as you can see from his beads, he's probably not allowed to beg. But his presence no doubt means, 'Give me something.' We'll do so when we go out."

The colonel's health had improved and he used to go horseback riding with his daughter. As they passed the fanatic, they threw him a handful of coins. He did not seem to see them.

They galloped down the aloe-bordered roads, among the

cornfields whose stony soil yields only wretched crops, but crops so precious that the Moroccans hurl threats and curses on anyone who dares to touch the smallest sprout. The sky was covered with soft woolly clouds. The wind swept along the hot sand. Miss Green's head began to ache. They came home before sundown. The man was still there.

"Perhaps we didn't give him enough," said the young woman.

"No, I don't think that's it. I've been watching him. He's just praying."

"But if he doesn't want money he might pray somewhere else."

"Perhaps some mystic signs have marked this place as propitious. You see he's turned to the east, that is, to Mecca."

"He's staring at the house all the time."

"I'll wager he doesn't even see it."

All night the sirocco raged. Its blasts came in series, growing stronger and stronger, culminating in a sudden lull, broken again by wild gushes. The palm trees clashed with metallic fury. Ellen could not sleep.

When she opened her window around eight the next morning, she was surprised to see the fanatic sitting in the same place. Columns of sand whirled in the valley, the bushes groaned, lashed by the hurricane. But the man sat motionless, white with dust, as if he were dead.

She thought she would ask the cook about him.

"Isn't it queer, Amram," she said as she started pouring her tea, "that the Arab is still there. Why don't you ask him what he wants?"

Amram looked at her through half-closed lids to veil the desire burning in his eyes.

"I'm only a poor Jew," he murmured with mock humility. "I'm like vermin to him, a Moslem. Besides he's in a trance. You might as well try to talk to a stone wall."

"Couldn't you send him away?"

"I? I would never dare drive a *Hadj* away! All who follow the marabout, all the holy pilgrims back from Mecca are *Hadj*. If they were to hear that a poor Jew had dared insult one of them they would beat him to death!"

And as he drove the flies away with a dried palm leaf, Amram gazed at the young woman, his white moustaches scarcely hiding the sensuous curl of his lips. She sent him away.

"Never mind. I'll speak to the colonel."

The colonel thought the only thing to do was to leave the man alone.

"In India," he said, "you see fakirs grafted, practically encrusted, into places. They're almost like trees or fountains, you pass right by them, step on them in fact, without noticing them."

The sirocco blew all afternoon. The Greens did not go out. Ellen found the air in her room unspeakably oppressive. She decided to take her siesta in the arbour, in the garden. Although the sun and the dust passed through the lattice work she thought it was less stifling there than in her closed room.

The next morning a luminous blue, unruffled, wondrous, serene, spanned the world.

The fanatic seemed no more affected by the radiance of the weather than he had been by the storm that had raged over him for thirty-six whole hours. At lunch the colonel said:

"I ordered the horses at three. I thought we might see the *noriahs* on the road to Mogador."

"If you don't mind, I'd rather not go," Ellen said unconsciously.

"What's the matter?"

"Nothing, really. But I feel a little tired."

She spent the whole afternoon in the arbour reading a novel. When she looked up she would see the pilgrim, a brown spot against the blue-green of the cacti. She could see his face, bleak as an ashen sheet where only the fire of the black eyes burned. She tried to put him out of her consciousness, tried to think of him like a strange plant which Nature might have set sprouting before her door.

That night she had a frightful dream. Yellow clouds filled with sand raced across the sky. She seemed to be looking at them from above, where the air was quite still and she wondered what made them roll so wildly. And then

suddenly she saw, below, whirling in the hollow of a dune, the gigantic, distorted figure of the fanatic. His chest was horribly distended and his wiry body, undulating in the sun like a worm, gave the impetus to the clouds.

A vague uneasiness clung to her next morning.

"I don't think I'll go out today, Father," she said after breakfast. "I don't feel very well."

"No, you seem rather pale. That sirocco tired me, too. Let me give you some quinine."

Again she spent the day in the arbour. She felt a loathing for her room, she didn't know why. Around six o'clock a golden veil seemed to cover the sky. The palm trees seemed to expand, the air was still, the green things around seemed inexpressibly young. A sudden, imperious voluptuousness submerged the valley.

In the middle of the night Ellen woke up feeling as if someone had touched her shoulder. An uncanny sensation drove her out of bed. She went over to the window.

The deep, hidden perfume of the soil and of the plants was liberated, and permeated the night. In a pond nearby the frogs croaked wildly, in chorus, and then remained suddenly silent. Their clamour was so loud it almost sounded like the barking of dogs. From under a fig tree came the hushed sound of human voices—the stifled sob of a very young girl and the quick, pulsating breath of a man.

Ellen felt strangely weak. Everything seemed changed, the night, the appeal of nature, overpowered her. Human beings, despoiled of the artificial gilding shed by the sun's glory, seemed more real, bared, in this blackness, more intense, more brutally obsessed.

Indeed there were, in the universe, other forces than southern winds or waves dashing against the cliffs, forces invisible but just as violent and unconcerned, forces people never mentioned. . . .

The next day passed as the preceding ones. After dinner the colonel drank his whisky in the arbour, in the light of the portable lamp.

It was one of those absolutely dry nights when it seems as if the African soil, stripped of all surrounding air, rises and merges into the very sky.

Ellen was embroidering some handkerchiefs. She kept struggling against something, she didn't know what. For more than an hour she had meant to go to bed, but it was beyond her power to bend her knee or lift her arm. She felt the perspiration trickle down her neck.

When her father left she called her *ayah*. She begged the woman to fix her hair.

The Cingalese undid the knot and the golden mass tumbled in rich waves to the ground. She began to comb it, mumbling her admiration in a childish, singing voice.

Alone, again, Ellen sank back in her chair. She relaxed, gave up fighting.

She awoke in terror and immediately closed her eyes again, nauseated, sick with horror. Three steps away from her stood the fanatic. Only the eyes seemed to hold together that mass of withered flesh, ravaged by smallpox, scarred with self-inflicted wounds, purulent with ulcers.

"What do you want?" she asked. She could scarcely speak.

She wanted to get up and run into the house. But she felt as if she were caught in the meshes of a heavy net; it was all she could do to get to her feet, holding on to the lattice-work. She could not have dealt the intruder a blow, driven him away—life seemed ebbing out of her, she could not even speak roughly.

"How did you get in?" she murmured. "Why do you look at me like that? What is it you want?"

He pointed a withered hand at the girl's undulating hair. With the other hand, strangely expressive, he made signs for her to cut off a lock.

"Don't touch me!" she screamed.

And wrenching herself away, at last, by a violent exertion of will power, she ran to her room. It did not occur to her not to go down again, not to obey. But at the same time a subconscious instinct told her to beware.

Before her lay the skin of a lion her father had killed a few years before, in South Africa. She took the scissors, cut off a lock, and summoning all her courage, she went down to the pilgrim.

He was waiting, motionless. She handed him the blond,

silken lock, tried to smile. Without a word he placed it to his lips and his forehead and passed out.

She was quite lucid. She noticed that like many of the pilgrims he had two great round sores on his ankles, infested with flies.

A strange reticence prevented her from confiding in her father. She only dared confess what happened to her nurse.

"Think of that, the mangy dog! Who knows what he might do if Missus had given him a lock of her own hair! He would have Missus in his power . . ."

And lowering her voice she added:

"Doesn't Missus know the wild beast wants her?"

The young woman flushed.

"Don't speak of it. Of course I know."

In reality the idea had never occurred to her before. She had imagined the possibility of being murdered, robbed or poisoned, but not for a moment had she imagined that in that human ruin lived the same passion that made Amram's eyes close when he looked at her and brought a vicious smile to Youssef's lips. She felt pervaded by a feeling of disgust and astonishment. At a thought of the last days, of her heavy torpor in the arbour, of the strange languor that had nailed her, helpless, under the fanatic's gaze, she felt like plunging into a bath of clear water. She asked herself what this force could be that could unnerve people at a distance, hinder movements and thoughts and even leave traces in the profound realm of dreams. She did not know that if a man knows how to place the force accumulated by ascetism at the command of his instincts he becomes a fiend, a demon, who can bend to his wishes the proudest bodies and souls.

Although the sun's glorious majesty desolated the valley she was glad to go out with her father, into the gardens. Her head felt empty, like after a fever. They walked to the end of the shrubbery, where a curtain of fire undulated over the sand.

When they came back they passed the fanatic. He sat motionless, holding the golden curl in his shriveled hand.

She went to bed early that night.

Darkness seemed to offer no relief from the heat. With doors and windows open, the houses seemed to gasp for breath, for an eddy in the motionless air.

About one o'clock Ellen woke up. Moonlight, clear as dawn, filled the room. A sensation of increased life, of strange, irritating power ran through her body. She seemed to smell that peculiar animal odour of sweat and dirt, that odour that clings to beggars, camels and dogs, who wallow on the hot soil. She tried to sleep, buried her head in her pillow. But the odour seemed to hover around her. She could not lie still. She sat up, stretched her frail arms. They felt stronger than cables. She pushed aside the mosquito netting, stepping out of bed. Her bare feet touched the stone floor. She shrank back, in surprise. The lion skin was not there. She distinctly remembered having felt it under her feet, when she went to bed. Now it was lying in the middle of the room. She felt as if she were dreaming one of those dreams where personality seems doubled, and you record absurd events while at the same time you realise that they are absurd. Of course she was dreaming! But the *skin started to move!* From the garden came the ghastly laugh of the chacal! . . . And the cold stones under her feet? . . . She was *not* dreaming! The dead skin moved again, animated with ghoulish life!

Miss Green spent the rest of the night crouched against the wall, biting into the mosquito netting in order not to scream.

When she at last dared look on the floor, in the orange light preceding dawn, the lion's skin lay clinging to the door as if a servant's broom, and not the fluid of an unknown energy had thrown it there.

When the sun rose the fanatic barked a curse, got to his withered feet and set out toward the desert.

A POOR MAN

By ANDRE LICHTENBERGER

(From *Les Conteurs Inédits*)

AT precisely ten a.m., as every morning, the powerful limousine of Claude Harlier, the well-known financier, as the society column always describes him, came to a halt in front of his offices on the Boulevard Haussmann.

The man stormed out of the car. From out of his massive face, clear eyes fixed the chauffeur for an instant. The voice was precise: "Noon, Joseph, as usual." Then with firm, somewhat deliberate step that was characteristic of him and had remained supple, despite the heaviness of his fifty years, the man went up the steps.

On the threshold, between the Corinthian pilasters, he returned the deferential greeting of the porter and, amid the crowding ushers, crossed the vast lobby of imitation marble decorated with gilt panels, and entered his spacious private office, furnished in correct English style.

With quick gesture and glance, he ran through his mail. Half a dozen letters were thrust speedily into the waste-paper basket; from beggars, cranks, would be blackmailers, or anonymous critics. With his blue pencil he underlined two sentences in a voluminous epistle scrawled widely across a big sheet of unclean paper, crushed anyhow into an envelope; a madman's dreams, or the suggestions of a genius . . . who can tell with these inventors? There is always a chance. For further enquiry.

One more letter. A familiar handwriting. The financier shrugged his shoulders: the daily appeal from that wretched Lardois. One of the comrades of his youth, ill fitted for the battle of life, whose innate helplessness was increased by astounding bad luck, destined irrevocably to failure. Ten times at least, a helping hand had been extended

to him; ten times he had fallen back into the mire, till the business man had given orders he was not to be admitted. Like the others, unread, the starved failure's letter was torn into pieces.

The man's finger pressed one of the array of buttons lining his desk. M. Le Pastre, general secretary, responded instantly to the ring. A thin young man, clean shaven, neatly dressed in a black coat, he had, save for a less piercing glance, the appearance of a smaller scale replica of his chief, made of some softer material. He had a huge brief bag under his arm, which he opened quickly and from which he extracted half a dozen *dossiers*.

A curt "Good morning!" then to work.

Very briefly, the secretary gives his report on various cases. The chief listens, puts a question, scribbles down a note. Now and then, he extends his hand, takes up a document, or verifies some detail on one of the reports. When the secretary has finished, the chief, in very few words, approves, corrects, completes, puts on the finishing touches. Whether it be temporary or final, negative or positive, his decision is always trenchant. M. Le Pastre takes it down in shorthand on a block.

In the business world, Claude Harlier has the reputation of being an authoritative and very precise man. No twists and turns about him, no false maneuvers, no eloquence and no sensitiveness. To the doing of business, neither gloves nor mittens, nor even literary grace are required; just strong white hands to knead the dough. The financial and industrial battle is on that must be given with clenched teeth and vigorous elbow play. Blows will be received: that is all in the day's work, and they must be returned without unnecessary brutality. As for employees, they must be paid well though not extravagantly, and they must work without a hitch.

"You know, don't you, that I admit neither excuses nor claims. The machine must work smoothly; if it does not, why, change the cogs. I cannot take the time to examine each individual case on its merits. Business must not be mixed up with philanthropy. My wife looks after our charity department. My social duty is a thing I look after

outside this office. Here my job is to gain my bread by moving pawns about, and I am going to move them as I want, within the rules of the game. So I beg of you, M. Le Pastre, never to try to reach my heart; my brain is the proper address.

"You tell me that Van Hoven demand twenty per cent participation? We don't owe it to them, but they've got us. Let's give it to them, and next time see we draft our contract tighter. Further delay to that fool Langros is out of the question. What have I to do with his domestic troubles? Either he delivers as per contract, or I get my damages. Nothing annoys me like whining. And don't forget it."

Young M. Le Pastre, bowing assent, does not forget it. Last winter, he nearly died of bronchitis aggravated by pleurisy. But it was just at the time of the big struggle with the Italian firm. So he remained at his post, without a minute's grace, right to the end. Since that, Claude Harlier thinks a good deal of his lieutenant; and the lieutenant knows it. He feels that, in the chief's estimation, he is an asset; no more intimate relation than that could exist; you only need to glance at the cold eyes of the man to realise that.

M. Le Pastre had come to the end of his report; he bowed and withdrew.

Three rings brought in as many departmental heads. True, the general secretary is the clearing house of the office, all decisions pass through his hands, and his signature alone is authoritative. But Claude Harlier, out of habit as well as principle, likes to keep in touch with his other lieutenants. A commander-in-chief does nothing without his chief-of-staff, but he is not solely dependent upon him. He enriches his experience and tightens his grip by coming into direct contact with the other members of the staff and the army corps commanders.

The works manager of the big shop at Brive, who is passing through Paris, gives a brief account of the strike. No sign of yielding yet, but hunger is beginning to gnaw; soup kitchens are being besieged. Harlier listens attentively: "M. Le Pastre has informed you of my decision.

No concessions. Not one of the strike leaders to be readmitted. I would rather close down. A lesson is required."

M. Leblanc comes next; he confirms the news that Barrois & Co. propose an amicable agreement. "Legally, we are entirely in the right, but . . ." One must take account of long legal delays, expert witnesses' fees, arbitration costs, and the like. So, he took upon himself not to refuse the offer straightaway. Harlier approves:

"I was telling M. Le Pastre how much I appreciate the reasons for your decision."

The boss is not prone to praising. M. Leblanc blushes with pleasure and goes.

Two minutes later he is replaced by Father Herrlich, as he was universally known. A flushed face under a crown of grey hairs; it tells of energy, but also of anxiety. His features are all awry. It is his negligence, or rather his rash confidence that led to the defective Van Hoven contract. In a voice he vainly attempts to make firm, he explains his error and deplores its consequences; all that with his singing Alsatian accent, half pathetic, half comical. He stutters, and sweat is pearling on his brow.

The chief listened to him for five minutes; then he interrupted:

"It is to you we owe the Van Hoven deal. Your mistake made it less profitable than otherwise, but it is still quite a good deal. Let us say no more about it. Get your own back first chance there is."

He reaches out his hand. Father Herrlich goes out of the room with damp eyes and a heart bursting with gratitude:

"What a man! What a man!"

Another button pushed. At the private office door Miss Elise appears, the typist.

"Are you right?"

Pacing up and down the room, Harlier dictates several letters and one brief report. The pacing is a question of hygiene and of habit. Walking keeps muscles and brain active. He speaks all of a run, with very few pauses and no repetitions. His voice is clear, a trifle metallic, and it condenses thought into neat, almost geometrical

propositions. Machinelike, the woman registers the sentences. But, suddenly a hesitating voice ventures:

"I beg your pardon, Sir, 'The national interest that must remain one of our . . .'"

Quite surprised, Harlier looked at her:

"Cannot you follow me?"

He looks at his stenographer. The young woman's eyes are staring vaguely, her lips are bloodless; her hands are trembling.

"Are you unwell?"

Her pale lips flushed slowly.

"It is nothing, Sir, just a fit of dizziness."

True, it seems to be nothing, and the assiduous pencil resumes its course. Before she left the room, however, Claude Harlier gave her a warning:

"If you are unwell, take a tonic or see a physician. If you cannot follow my dictation, I will have to put you back to ordinary duties. My personal secretary must work without a hitch."

A ring. The usher announces several visitors, one after the other. Harlier only receives by appointment. No need for him to write upon the walls of his office: "Be brief. Spare your time and mine." His icy, though correct, manner, the piercing quality of his blue eyes, are sufficiently effective in cutting short any flights of verbosity; they discompose the most blatant bores.

Among his visits this morning was one from Mudir Pasha. The oriental advanced indolently, a smile on his lips, his teeth like a goldsmith's shop window, laden with jewels; he sat down at his ease and started to unfold the wings of his native eloquence. Within five minutes the master's hand has, with a few sure pricks, burst this particular bubble.

"My advisers have studied this proposition. It stands thus: . . . Do you accept? Yes or no? I give you a week to answer. I have no doubt your reply will be in the affirmative."

Intense agitation seized the oriental magnate, born of ancestral instincts of bazaar bargaining; words surged up to his thick lips; his fat, podgy hands fluttered about his cheeks like wasps round a honeypot. The Levantine was

politely led to the threshold of the lobby, and suddenly found himself in the street, just the merest bit ruffled. Yet, before the week is out, he will be back and will affix his signature to the contract, draft of which is lying in M. Le Pastre's drawer at this moment.

Before a quarter past twelve, the papers that encumbered the desk have all been dealt with and cleared. There is no one in the waiting room.

The general secretary comes for instructions.

"I have two important engagements this afternoon, so will not be here before half past four. Nothing new this morning?"

The tone of this question is significant. It means: "Unless it is something that will prevent the earth from going round, you had better not mention it."

M. Le Pastre understood the implication quite well, but he was young, and the cement of his composition, although it may look like that of his employer's, is by no means as hard. He speaks hurriedly:

"Nothing important. A new, almost desperate appeal by Dubron-Lagarde. They beg for a further delay and are ready to give us the interest in their firm which they refused us three months ago."

Claude Harlier shrugged his shoulders and struggled into his coat:

"You told them there was nothing doing?"

M. Le Pastre hesitated for a fraction of a second:

"I hinted as much."

Harlier looked at him with a slight frown:

"You know I never reverse a decision. In July I told them my terms and informed them they would not be renewed. They chose to refuse; so much the worse for them. I am not going to cheapen myself by haggling."

M. Le Pastre bowed.

"Then, it means we . . . strangle them?"

Harlier made a significant movement with his thin, strong fingers.

"Let's strangle, then."

Generally, before returning home, the financier gave himself the luxury of a swift drive through the Bois, but the

conversation had lasted five minutes. He rushed into his automobile:

"Quickest way home!" he shouted to the chauffeur.

II

The financier's house in the rue de la Faisanderie.

Madame Harlier, very Parisian, elegant, clever, turned to her husband a smiling face which skilful care had well warded against the ravages of her forty odd years. From a childish mouth, an impetuous greeting rang out, as Janie, the youngest of the brood, threw herself on her father and hung on to his legs.

"I've won, and so has mother."

It seemed that cheeky Anne-Louise had grumbled awhile ago:

"I bet that just because Germaine is to fetch me at half past one to go to the private view of the Salon Hyper-naturaliste, daddy will be late."

Harlier responded to his youngest's caress and looked at his eldest with mingled affection and irony:

"Ah, my lady, so you venture to distrust your daddy, eh? Yet I imagine I am not in the habit of being late. It was fine of you, Janie, to have stuck up for me. I'll remember that."

He noticed the young girl's cheeks reddening, and, to soften the lesson, he added:

"As a matter of fact, your sister was nearly right. It would hardly have been my fault, however. And I don't think being late can be a fault anyway . . ." This last with semi-humorous intent as he pointed the clock out to a big lad who, completely puffed out, burst into the drawing room just as the butler opened the double doors and announced: "Lunch is served, Ma'm."

Lunch is the beneficent pause in the day's work that gives family unity a chance. In the course of a very full life, Claude had learned the value of his home. He had deliberately made a home and spent himself in consolidating and embellishing it. Of course, he was too clever and strong-willed not to be selfish. But that point of view helped: how deplorable, how restricting to one's own

enjoyment it would be to refrain from enriching one's life with a companion, or prolonging and multiplying it by surrounding oneself with bright young lives. Claude Harlier had toiled hard, not only for himself but for his family. His hearth was at once a stimulant to effort, and one of its most essential rewards.

There are naïve or neurotic people who, in their gluttony for life, spoil its most delicate flavours. Harlier was not of these. Throughout the turmoil of a busy Parisian existence, he kept up the daily contact that makes it possible for the members of a family to live together otherwise than as casual guests assembled in an hotel or a boarding house.

Early breakfast is not a favourable opportunity, and in the evening, society makes its imperious calls. Harlier had struck out of his program the business lunch, so dear to many of his kind, and but seldom did he invite a stranger to the luncheon table. It was the hour of rest, when the tired hack lays aside his harness. Thoughts and hearts draw near, seek each other, often find each other at such times.

The meal was simple, if well prepared, and Claude ate sparingly of the dishes. His eyes were wandering peacefully from his wife, who sat opposite him, to their children. He put questions to pretty Germaine about her studio, and to big Max about his college, reminded his wife of the social evenings for the following month and pledged himself to take little Janie, himself, to the Châtelet Theatre some early Sunday. It was a joy to him to see himself thus surrounded by his own folk in the midst of this feverish city; he felt like an Arab *caid* who, a few steps away from the scorching desert, hardly conscious of the distant yells of jackals and hyenas, enjoys the shady peace of his garden, where graceful slave girls flit about to the sound of sweet flutes.

The smoking room afterwards. Anne-Louise is pouring out the coffee, and doing it with easy charm. Claude Harlier follows her movements. God! Is it possible that this graceful young lady with assured countenance and manners is the turbulent child that but yesterday romped about in short stockings?

Suddenly the father felt a doubt creeping over him. After all, was this family intimacy, of which this midday meal was the symbol, anything else than a fiction, a contrivance to throw dust in his own eyes?

In fine, of these beings that are near to him, around him, what precisely does he know? In what measure is their life really linked with his? It is not a daily hour of semi-silence or commonplace conversation under the keen eye of a domestic, that can knit and keep together these several souls. In point of fact, every one of these beings pursues his own course, independent, solitary. What are the inhabitants of the house in the rue de la Faisanderie but strangers to each other?

The least of his college pals, any one of his professors, knows more about big Max than does his father. The latter only sees some of his attributes; a healthy appetite, a keen love of sport, and, here and there, a few unimportant glimpses. But how his son understands life, how he is preparing himself for it, what manner of man he will grow up to be, these are all things Claude Harlier knows not. It were a task well nigh impossible at this stage to undertake that delicate educative and formative mission that used to be the prerogative of a father in the matter of him who was destined to carry on his tradition. Max is, for the rest, no longer here: he has retired to revise some lesson, maybe, or, who knows? to scan hurriedly, secretly, some forbidden book.

A ring at the front door bell. Anne-Louise rises: "Goodbye, Daddy."

"What, so soon away?"

"Ah, yes, of course, Germaine and the Hypernatural Salon."

"Well, don't say I'm going to keep you waiting again!"

A smile with a touch of constraint in it, a quick kiss, a hurried glide . . . Claude Harlier follows with his eyes her disappearing form. What can he guess of the mysteries that the flood of advancing years has piled up on that shore?

It is Janie's turn next to say goodbye. Mademoiselle is waiting to take her out for a walk. How her childish arms

hug her father's neck! Claude takes his cigarette from his lips to give her another kiss, but the child is paying little attention:

"Mother, it is fine today. May I put on my velvet jacket?"

Permission is given, and the girl jumps away in whirlwind fashion, like a kitten after a ball of paper.

Yes . . . a charming imitation of a small domestic pet, a King Charles spaniel or a silken-haired Angora; does Claude Harlier know aught else than that about his last born?

From the door that has closed upon the fair, curly-haired child, the man's looks go to Madame Harlier whose elegant outline trenches on the background of the window blind. She seems busy and absorbed, frowning slightly, scanning a collection of store catalogues. Brusquely Claude wonders whether his life's companion (so the priest called her when he put their hands together) is much less of a closed book to him than the children she has borne him who grow under his roof in so strange, detached a way. At bottom, what was it that united their destinies in that far off time? Was it real sympathy, or was it not rather a coincidence of convenience and luck, helped on by the keen throb of two young, ardent natures?

No doubt, in the full sense a man gives to the word, he had loved that sweet, graceful body. In his dreams of success, a main ingredient was the desire to surround it with riches and prestige. But was there aught else that ever bound them to each other besides a superficial likeness of habits and tastes? Supposing there had been a time when he had felt a real, deep craving to give himself to her, to lock his lips in hers, had not use long since worn down this feeling and changed these impulses into mere routine formulas? They live side by side, but what is there in common in their thought of thoughts? Does she suspect anything of the keen struggle he has had to conquer and keep their present comfort? And he himself, has it ever occurred to him to enquire what has become of the soul of that young girl who, years ago, proud, timid, sweetly mysterious, put her hand in his keeping?

Their lives flow side by side, but, according to geometry,

parallel lines never meet. It is only an optical illusion that makes us sometimes think they do.

Claude Harlier sighed involuntarily. Then almost at once, with quick gesture, he put his hand to his heart.

Madame Harlier happened to look up just at that moment; she noticed her husband's paleness. It is not the first time; once or twice lately she has traced marks of trouble on his countenance, of tiredness in his bearing. . . . She rose, went to him, caressed his strong shoulders with a touch of her hands and enquired in affectionate tone:

"Are you unwell?"

He imprinted a kiss on the forehead that was bending over him, and allowed a smile to play around his lips. Then, he, too, rose.

"Oh, it is nothing, dear, a passing cramp. That's all."

They exchanged a few more banal words. Both have a heavy afternoon before them: clothes to try on, calls to make, shopping to do for her part, committee meetings for his.

"Going to look up your mother towards evening?"

"Yes, I dare say."

Moreover Claude is to dine out. Madame Harlier lifted her elegant hands: "What a life!"

But who would invent a different one? Already her thoughts are running ahead from Parc Monceau, where her dressmaker is waiting, to Avenue Henri-Martin where they are expecting her at a bridge and literary tea party.

"Taking the car?"

"Yes, but I'll send it back in half an hour."

Another kiss.

"Sure you're quite well?"

"Quite, thanks."

Before getting into his automobile, Claude Harlier gave an address to the chauffeur:

"14 rue de Monceau, then you go home."

III

At Dr. Cerfont's, the great heart specialist, 14 rue de Monceau.

"Doctor, I have come to ask you how I am getting on."

The eminent physician bowed slightly. His features were still those of a young man, but the short brown beard was beginning to show silver threads.

The usual rites were performed.

"Please lie down . . . breathe . . . that's right . . . breathe again . . . going to test your blood pressure."

Then the usual questions. Any particular symptoms? Fits of dizziness? Headaches?

No, nothing very new. Always somewhat puffed, pains in the arm, insomnia; from time to time, and this seems to be becoming more frequent, a shooting stab in the region of the heart. So the talk went on, politely, commonplace, interrupted merely by the pauses the examination rendered necessary.

Both men's faces equally impassive. On the physician's lips an unchanging smile is stereotyped. Harlier's voice reveals nothing but worldly ease, with perhaps just a tinge of affectation. Save those whose trade it is to bend over suffering humans and mark their little tricks of concealment, no one would guess the agony that gnawed behind that masklike face of the Roman features.

For two years now, Claude Harlier has known his fate.

For a long time, perfect health had held him apart from those whom he jocularly termed "morticulturalists." "Being sick is a question of good will and having time to do it," was another of his sayings.

A paradox it was a rude lesson to him to abandon. The first time, when Professor Cerfont, having examined him, said quite pleasantly: "Nothing much amiss, dear Sir, but you'll have to watch that heart of yours." He did not realise the full portent of the menace. Only after a five minutes' conversation did he realise that he was doomed. Perhaps, despite his robust appearance, unknown to himself, some hereditary defect, long concealed, was coming to light. Round about fifty it established itself. He had one of these ills which one cannot shake off.

It was a rough blow. Harlier professed to have no fear of death. This was not brag, merely that death had hitherto been outside his horizon. An ineradicable instinct seemed to promise him many years of fruitful life and abun-

dant enjoyment. Death had never come into his calculations. He knew the debt would have to be paid sometime; when that day should come, oh so long hence, it should find him ready to pay. But he had no thought of seeing the usher so soon. And here, suddenly, he was knocking at the door . . .

This man whom people thought so strong, who thought himself so strong, shuddered in sheer, abject cowardice. It seemed incredibly monstrous to him that the scythe that cuts down young lives by the million should threaten him. But exhibiting pride prevented him from his fear.

"Doctor, as man to man, I cannot be cured; but can I last?"

Followed the usual phrases, pronounced with the usual sibylline smile. Then the verdict.

"Very strict precautions and a total rest would, no doubt, retard the evolution of the disease. If you were to leave off all work, vegetate in a sanatorium . . ."

Harlier shook his head decisively. No doubt in this crucial moment, he was prompted by the instincts of the actor no less than by reason. His pride forbade whining before the executioner. But there also spoke out in his words the training of the business man, accustomed to take a quick decision in the most critical situations.

"No, Doctor, I am not going to interrupt my life. I am not interested in existing like a rag, a cast off. I will stand out to the end. All I ask of you is to aid me fight down the pain and keep back the thing as long as possible. I would rather go down suddenly, in one big collapse."

The man of science signified his esteem for the moral courage of his patient with a slight gesture; perhaps it was mere professional habit. Then he prescribed a number of simple precautions, a few drops and powders.

"That ought to help appreciably, and don't forget, my dear Sir, that the resources of Nature are infinite and that science daily registers the most astounding surprises."

A man condemned to death keeps a flicker of hope of reprieve right up to the step of the electric chair. These words of futile hope, white lie of pitiful politeness, did not impress the thinking mind of Claude Harlier.

But they gave nourishment to the vital instinct within him. Harlier never really accepted Cerfont's verdict. Intellectually, of course, he had to, the more so as the progress of the disease reminded him of it. Yet, deep down, undying, there remained a shred of illusion. Every time he went up in the lift of the rue de Monceau he had a throb of absurd hope. Every time he lay down on the couch for examination by the specialist, he thought of the chance of a miracle. This very day, despite so many alarming symptoms, he dreamed for the mere fraction of a second that a radiant surprise would illumine the physician's impassive features and that the thin lips would utter the saving words.

"Truly, my dear Sir, it is amazing, but you are on the way to being cured." A dream . . . as that of a little child about fairies or Father Christmas.

And, when the examination is over, as he is dressing, a new thought surges up, tormenting, teasing. Could he not induce, bribe, compel this man to save him? Lick his boots for it? A hundred thousand francs for one ray of hope; millions for one touch of the magic wand. But a man knows how to keep his countenance.

"Well, Doctor, things taking their course?"

As the other keeps silent, he insists, without altering his tone:

"You know what we agreed on; the truth, the whole truth."

The physician took up a penholder from his desk, balanced it between his fingers, then, hitting with it the palm of his hand with little dry blows, he launched out upon an explanation:

"The lesion has not made any specially alarming progress, but there are signs of wear in the muscle . . ."

Harlier interrupted him:

"Doctor, the details of the disease do not interest me, so please spare me technical talk. What I want to know is this, am I getting worse? Can you do anything to relieve these new symptoms? Am I incessantly exposed to . . . a grave accident?"

The professor put out a reassuring hand:

"I should not say things are really critical yet. Surprises are always possible, and they become less unlikely as the morbid state endures longer, but there is no evidence of imminent sudden complications. Of course, complete rest would be more reasonable, but since you will not hear of it, the possibility of accidents must be taken into account. The symptoms naturally multiply as the evil grows. Doctor Gerbo has found out a very remarkable preparation which is very efficacious against palpitations and regularises the workings of the heart . . ."

He scribbles out the prescription. While the fountain pen is running, Harlier puts more questions:

"Before I go, Doctor, cannot you be a little more precise? I don't necessarily want to attain the age of Methuselah, and I know most men end up by dying of something or other. What I do want is to have a reasonable time for preparation; I have a lot of arrangements to make. I need time. Can you give me one year, two years?"

Eagerly, with clenched fists, he awaits the oracle.

The doctor folds the sheet of paper in two, encloses it in an envelope, and hands it to his patient. His smile is more reposeful than ever.

"Well, yes, all men are doomed from birth. If you take plenty of precautions, avoid overwork, strain, shocks, imprudences, you may bury quite a lot of your contemporaries yet. But I should be lacking in the respect I owe your courage and your social importance if I were to lull you with empty words. The wisest course for all of us is to make all arrangements as if death were to call for us tomorrow. You know the wise saying: *'Carpe diem, carpe horas.'* There is nothing to justify immediate anxiety, but science cannot fix any definite term."

The lips of the high priest are closed. Harlier shakes hands and says goodbye:

"Shall I come back and see you in two months' time?"

"Whenever you like."

Going down the staircase, the man remembers; on his last visit, when he asked the doctor whether immediate danger threatened, he had shaken his head decisively. Today his denial had been much weaker, more qualified.

Harlier felt his heart grow cold; he placed his hand on it. It seemed as if Death were beating hard between his ribs.

IV

A meeting of the Committee for the Protection of Girl Mothers.

Claude Harlier was a member of about fifty philanthropic and humanitarian bodies. "The wealthy man who ignores his debt to society is, in my opinion, a traitor and a crook." He had used these words in an interview a year before, and they had run the round of the press. Incidentally, they had raised some ironical laughter.

A man about town said once: "Three-quarters of the so-called charity societies only serve the purpose of making an honest man blush and bestowing decorations on humbugging profiteers." Envious people had not failed to apply this dictum to Harlier. It was an easy game for sarcasm to contrast the widely published liberalities of the financier with his proverbial hardness of heart in business. A labor paper commented thus: "Alms are to certain financiers the luxury tax they pay to legitimise their robberies; it is at the same time the cheapest item in their publicity account." Half a dozen officious and anonymous friends had sent this paper to the rue de la Faisanderie with the venomous passage marked in blue pencil.

Such blows come from too low down to be worthy of the attention of a Harlier.

Whether politic or spontaneous, his alms were both numerous and large. But he spent more willingly of his purse than of his time. His days were too precious to waste in palavers which, however edifying, were generally rather futile.

So his entry made a sensation among the two dozen people assembled at this committee: charitable ladies, high retired officials, and ambitious youngsters.

He was immediately seized upon by the Baroness de Sourigues and General de Formonteil: "What luck to get you here for a few moments, my dear Sir!"

M. Mouldot-Lanoir, of the Academy of Moral and Political Science, in opening the proceedings, addressed a discreet greeting to "the eminent man who, defender of the highest national interests on the field of economic and financial affairs, as so many were on that of war, has not hesitated to leave his harassing task for a short time in order to bring to this assemblage of enthusiastic Samaritans the inestimable weight of his authority." An approving murmur followed the florid sentence.

Little Madame Labutte bent towards her neighbour and whispered mockingly in her ear:

"Price of butter: ten thousand francs at least!"

The secretary, young M. de Fondlagarde, spoke next. Without wasting time on generalities, he invited the enlightened persons around him to consider on the spot the practical means of realising the aims of the society. In this age, he said, when the diminution in births imperilled the future of the race, France must surround with a double fence of precautions the fragile lives that, through the very circumstances of their birth, appear most in danger of succumbing. A judicious system of bounties will do much to dissuade the poor victims of male thoughtlessness from attempting criminal maneuvers. In addition to existing institutions, a model baby farm, situated in the country and conducted on the most rigorously hygienic lines, will afford a refuge, not only to the mothers, but to countless infants, among whom the future state may conceivably find a new d'Alembert or a new Lespinasse. But it was his duty to draw their attention to the fact that such an enterprise required considerable funds, and the object of that day's meeting was to devise means whereby these funds might be raised.

Generous applause greeted the end of this peroration. The chairman having duly complimented the speaker, appealed to the meeting to make suggestions.

General timidity at first. Getting a start is a laborious process. At last a hand was raised. A pimpled creature rose diffidently and mumbled a few words. Two other orators immediately arose, and from that moment, suggestions, objections and questions simply rained. A very thin,

middle-aged lady proposed a bazaar; a podgy young one was for a subscription dance; a concert was favoured by Madame Delcroix, whose age floated somewhere between the two.

Professor Gillois, entrenched on top of a very high stand-up collar, remarked that, to realise the sums required, such efforts were quite inadequate. He recited columns of figures; he brandished a budget. Agitation began to seize various benches. What? Were good will and enthusiasm to be discouraged. A growing murmur of whisperings arose, making speaking difficult.

M. Mouldot-Lanoir, with paternal firmness, but no offensive display of authority, demanded silence. The while, he was peacefully drawing little ballet girls on the sheet of paper before him. By long experience he knew that it is essential at such functions to let off some initial steam; only after individual zeal has found voluble expression can serious debate start.

Suddenly, however, he half turned. Claude Harlier was whispering in his ear. The chairman shook his bald head, exposing the calcareous veins of his neck, and, holding the financier's hands in his own, was visibly trying to detain him.

This pantomime was not lost on the audience. Mme. X. and Mme. Y. were engaged, somewhat prematurely perhaps, in a discussion on the uniforms of the nurses of the proposed institution. The committee began to show signs of impatience. The venerable chairman gave a sharp rap with his paper cutter.

"Ladies and gentlemen, although I fully realise the deep interest of the question under discussion, I propose that furthur consideration of it be adjourned. Our distinguished colleague, M. Harlier, has to leave shortly for another engagement, and he has just made me an announcement of such importance that I suggest he should take the floor at once."

An approving murmur ran the rounds; silence was imposed by vigorous "Shu-uts."

In a very few words, Claude Harlier begged pardon for interrupting the discussion. It was totally unnecessary, he

said, for the communication he had just made to the chairman to be repeated by himself to the meeting. But, since the Chair had pressed him to do so (cries of "That's right! Speak up!") . . .

"A financier, and I am no more than that, has only one excuse for putting down his name on the list of members of a philanthropic body, and that is, to support the cause in the way in which he is professionally best able to do. Ladies and gentlemen, it is not within my province to make fine speeches but to try to give a lead. To carry out the magnificent scheme laid before you, money is required. Money is available. I know that you will succeed in knocking at the proper doors to get it. Society will not seek to escape her obligations. Sheeplike, she will hesitate all the less, since she will be given an example. Money powers are not always powerless in a good cause. Allow me to fulfil my duty in response to your appeal to money powers. I have much pleasure in handing to your chairman, in the name of the firm of Harlier & Co., a cheque for ten thousand francs."

Moving speech by the chairman, hurried exit of the donor, rousing cheers of the audience.

Quite pleased with herself, little Madame Labutte shouts into the ear of her neighbour, the Colonel:

"The very sum I mentioned. Ain't I a good guesser?"

Congratulations all round. Such an initial subscription ensured success. Say what you like, Harlier is a fine chap. That will shut his critics up.

One voice is heard:

"Tuts! For all it costs him! He plucks enough pigeons in a day's work to repay him his alms with interest."

Another voice:

"Never mind. It was jolly handsome of him. But I find him greatly altered."

"He? Get away! He is as strong as a navvy. He needs to be, to lead the life he does."

"Well, of course, the Stock Exchange is wearing work."

"If there was only the Stock Exchange!"

"Go on! You mean to say you credit these tales which are now current?"

"Listen to me, my dear. I am not making it up. I heard . . ."

Eyes brighten up, heads draw near together; in a half tone, confidential gossip is poured out, interrupted by little startled cries.

"Do you really believe . . .?"

"Well, I never!"

In the street Claude Harlier looked at his watch. He had half an hour free. He would give himself the unaccustomed luxury of wasting it. In the deepening gloaming he meandered past shop windows lighting up one by one, amid the noisy hustle of passersby, the rush of automobiles and the bell-ringing of tramway cars.

It was strangely pleasant, in the midst of Parisian bustle, to lose himself in the vast, varied life that lay around him. In kaleidoscopic fashion, every age, every part of the world, every kind of ware, seemed to pass before him.

An antiquary's window flooded with electric light, brought him back to the Stone Age; the quaint conventionalities of the Middle Ages were suggested by a gallery of ancient masters, as were the splendours of Louis XIV and the stilted grace of the eighteenth century. The posters and dioramas of a tourist agency evoke the gorgeous scenery of Africa and the Orient. In the shop windows, a wealth of colour: sparkling precious stones, marvelous blooms, silken furs, attract and fascinate the eye. And of all these magnificent treasures accumulated in the course of centuries, is he not in a way part owner?

Alas! It is all slipping from him, like sand trickling through one's fingers, or water through the tiny hand of a child.

At the corner of a doorstep, a monotonous whine draws his attention. Huddled up in the dark, holding out a shapeless hat, a wretched lame beggar is spelling out his lamentation.

Claude Harlier has frequently denounced street beggars, as also those who encourage them by giving, yet today, an irresistible instinct drives him. He searches his pocket, and throws some coins to the wretch in whom, dimly, he divines a brother.

For, in this nightmare jungle, is the pariah more lonely than the man of money whom life already repulses and denies? He wandered through the gathering darkness, and felt desperately lonely and weak. The noise of a big city beats on his temples and somehow suggests the hunt tracking down its prey. Like huge monsters, the automobiles rush along the streets, their wide, brilliant eyes haunting him, snapping at him, drawing him into a kind of torpid vertigo.

At a street corner he stepped back suddenly. An enormous automobile bus, rolling by with a thunderous noise, had brushed him. Without the sharp swerve of the chauffeur, now yelling insults at him, he would be lying there on the street, a stark body, a shapeless mass of flesh. And, in tomorrow's papers there would be a "story," with headings. That would be all. Somewhere at the back of his mind, there crept in a shade of regret, shameful and cowardly, that this thing had not come to pass. It would have been the end of. . . What strange thoughts are these?

On the square, a public clock indicates it is 4.25 p.m.

Get ye gone, vain ghosts! Claude Harlier is back again in the swim of life. He steps out fast. His walking stick raps sharply on the pavement.

At a corner, a fair-haired young woman smiles at him and lifts her skirts coquettishly. She has carmined lips. The man gazes indifferently past her and goes on, to take up once more his post in the battle line.

V

At 4.35 p.m., Harlier was firmly ascending the steps to his office. He crossed the lobby with its Corinthian pillars, gave up his overcoat to an usher and scanned rapidly half a dozen visiting cards that had been laid out for him. M. Le Pastre, immovable, stands, waiting for instructions.

"I'll see Jounad. A man who has risked his life in darkest Africa to fetch radium for us is worth shaking hands with, even though he has not succeeded. You can deal with the others."

"Muillebois among them?" Harlier frowned.

"The cheek of the man to call again. Did you not tell him I would not see him."

M. Le Pastre nodded, but with the eyelids, a trick of his.

"Well, Sir, I hardly dared . . . he is an influential man, a deputy, an ex-Cabinet Minister. Who knows whether in the future one may not . . ."

"In the future? His future is either a criminal court or a revolver shot. I give him a year to make his choice. Still, you did right."

He grinned so wide that his back teeth were exposed.

"I happen to be in fine form today. I will speak to him. It will relieve me. But I want to see the man from Africa first."

He turned out to be a very giant, with tanned, dried up face, a wide lumpy forehead, sign of idealism. On his nose that resembled the beak of a bird of prey, he balanced enormous spectacles. Heavy lines furrowed his cheeks and his chin protruded like the prow of a ship; with his powerful hands he was twisting feverishly an already shapeless felt hat.

"M. President, I have come to give you my report on . . ."

"All right, M. Jouand, I will read your report. I already know that your conclusions are negative. It is a check, but I know this is due neither to a mistake nor to lack of energy. The stuff is there where you told us it was. But local conditions we cannot remedy render it impossible to exploit it at present. On the equator, one cannot improvise labour, order or means of transport. Some one after us will benefit by our and your labours, and will not even thank us for it. I wanted to shake hands with you and to assure you that I will always be ready to examine with sympathy any new proposition you may submit to us."

The explorer withdrew, with greater emotion than he had shown before the war cries and flying spears of the natives.

Now for the other man. A spacious form appeared in the frame of the doorway. A belly surging out in prow-like manner from the split tails of a frock coat. An impu-

dent, fat face with two little boring eyes, one of them is hiding behind a monocle that gives a false angle to the sight. The man looks a cross between a crook horse dealer and a braggart adventurer. Ignoring the fact that Claude Harlier had not risen on his entrance and had paid no attention to his outstretched hand, he established himself comfortably in an armchair, and, jovially, with legs crossed, he opened fire:

"My dear M. President . . ."

It was parliamentary verbiage in undiluted horror. A flux of words, confused, boiling over with verbosity, ill-treating alike grammar, logic and truth. A few frothlike formulas float on top after a while and become visible. They amount to this: however enamoured the National Socialist Party may be of the socialisation and democratisation of the means of production, it does not overlook the fact that important services may, in this period of transition, be rendered to the proletariat by certain great private interests. In principle, of course, the party is opposed to granting to private capital rights which, in its view, properly belong to the State, but it is capable when a convincing case is put, of accommodating its principles to the facts. To induce the party to do this, it would be wise to enlist the support of a man of influence within it. Once the party itself is won over, it will exert a powerful influence on the other parliamentary groups of the Left . . . Harlier listened with eyes half closed. There ensued a few seconds' silence, then he said, with clear deliberation:

"As I understand you, Sir, you are offering me your aid in securing from your friends, if not their support, at least their benevolent neutrality in the matter of the concessions which a trust I am connected with is seeking to obtain for a monopoly of the building of the new railway in Togoland. Am I right?"

The man's eye almost winked behind the glass rampart of the monocle. The fellow had taken his time to grasp the situation, but he seemed to have got there at last. The pursed lips expanded into a smile, half cynical, half good-natured.

"Well, my dear M. President, I thought that, in view of

our excellent relations and our common devotion to public interests, we might, despite some apparent divergences of opinion, be able to find a common ground . . ."

With curt gesture, Claude Harlier interrupted the pleader and remarked in a cutting voice:

"If I have heard you out, it is simply because this is the last interview you will have with me. Your time is precious, and so is mine, so I will cut out all circumlocutions. You ask me to buy the influence you say you have, just as I bought your vote in the Milford business. But, you see, on that occasion you swindled me. First, I realised that your boasted influence was a bluff, secondly, you sold me by supporting in Committee the offers of a rival firm. The ideal would be if one could, in business, only to deal with winners of the Monthyon Prize for virtue and probity, but the manners of our age render this impossible. At times, we have to use scoundrels. The only stipulation I make is that they must, when I employ them, serve me. I can make allowances to myself for making a mistake once, but not twice. You, Sir, possess neither the parliamentary influence you affect, nor the kind of honesty that makes it possible to do business even with a certain type of filibuster.

"Your credit in the House is entirely gone and you will not be reëlected at the dissolution next year, even supposing the Maleviaux cheque scandal does not break out before then and lead you to the Santé jail where a cell is reserved for you. There is therefore no reason why I should seek to overcome the disgust you inspire me with, or give you any help, or even shake hands with you."

The opening words of the financier's had made the politician jump. As the icy voice dropped slowly phrase after phrase, each more flaying than the last, hatred struggled with fear on the bloated features. The hiding monocle had fallen and the bloodshot eye was revealed, like a beast at bay. Huddled up in the armchair, the man looked as if he would like to leap upon his enemy. His clawlike hands were bent as if in a prelude to strangling. . . .

Yet, marvellous is the power of civilisation. He controlled himself, he even checked the insults that were burning his tongue, he swallowed the rage that had risen within

him. So, before the usher whom a ring had summoned to show him out, he contented himself with replying, as he rose, with impudent courtesy in which there was the merest hint of a threat:

"My dear M. President, believe me, I regret exceedingly that our viewpoints should be seemingly irreconcilable. I hope the day will not come when you will be sorry for your mistake. I need hardly add that my assistance in repairing the consequences of that mistake will ever be at your service."

Another ring.

"The mail, please. And tell M. Le Pastre I want him."

In waiting, Claude Harlier glanced at the evening paper. Most things seemed to be going awry in the world. A political scandal. An earthquake in Samoa. Suicide of a failure . . . hello! that name! Harlier read on with increased attention:

"SOCIETY MAN TURNED FAILURE
COMMITS SUICIDE

"M. John Lardois, a man of fifty-two, who had once moved in the best society, killed himself this morning by throwing himself from the window of his room, five stories up, number 11 bis rue Cail. Taken in an ambulance to the Lariboisière Hospital he died a few moments after admission.

"Born of a very good family, he had fallen step by step the ladder of financial misfortune and had reached a degree of misery which was unsuspected by his friends, for the deceased had, out of pride, always managed to keep up certain appearances.

"A pathetic detail came out on examining the papers found in his room. It appeared that a position of some importance had been offered him in a big industrial undertaking in Belgium. What seems to have determined him to commit suicide is the lack of about 100 francs to pay his journey to Brussels."

Ah, well . . . John Larbois has begged from his old comrade for the last time. Harlier could still see in the waste paper basket a corner of the envelope he had torn up that morning unread, in which, doubtless, the wretched man had written him a last prayer, or, maybe, a supreme curse.

For an instant the financier's features showed signs of emotion. But they resumed their marble appearance before M. General Secretary, crossing with swift silent steps the big room, had reached the desk and deposited in front of the chief the documents for signature.

One by one he submitted them, recalling in a word what each was about. In most cases, Harlier just glanced hastily, nodded approval, and signed, seemingly without having read it through. Yet it was curious to note that he, from time to time, would correct some slight typing mistake, some error of punctuation. A reply to MM. Huyghens, of Antwerp, made him wince.

"M. Le Pastre, although I am writing to Belgians, I want to write good French. Please get this letter done over again. It is full of expressions which, though perhaps usual in Antwerp, are not admitted by the Académie Française."

"Well, goodbye, M. Le Pastre. Your family all well, I hope?" . . . "Thanks, I have never felt so fit."

The automobile is waiting outside the door.

"Six o'clock. We have time. Take me rue de l'Yvette, passing by the avenue Mozart and through the Bois de Boulogne."

VI

A little house, sunk in a deep garden, near the avenue Mozart. Though only a stone's throw from the turmoil of Paris, it is still here like a small street in a provincial town, almost indeed, like the countryside.

The opening gate causes a rustic bell to ring. The gravel crunches under his feet. Through the glass panel of the door one notices the light going up in the hall. It is as if the arrival of the newcomer were bringing the old house to life again.

In the doorway appeared the face of an old servant, shining with joy when she recognised the visitor.

"How is your mistress?"

"Just so so; the doctor, he ain't too pleased. They're going to start them injections again. But he says it ain't serious."

The old woman walks in front of the financier and ushers him into the little drawing-room.

"It's Master Claude, Ma'm."

A bent figure rises out of the depths of an armchair, the drawn face lightens up, two white hands cease their knitting and are extended in welcome:

"Fancy it being you, darling, I did not expect you today."

The mother kisses the forehead of the big man who has always remained her darling. He has ever been her love, her all. Left a widow early, and almost ruined by her late husband's extravagance, Madame Harlier had concentrated on her son all her powers of love, all her vital energy, all her soul's ambition.

Portraits of Claude, at all ages, in all poses, in all sizes and manners of frames, surround the fond mother. Out of that baby with caressing eyes, out of that frail boy with bare legs, her loving care has made that strong proud youth, this grown man who wears the mask of success. Her life has been concentrated in his. Her heart has throbbed with his throughout his struggles, his troubles, his victories. If her heart is worn out today, it is worn out with the passion of maternal love.

And Claude has answered her affection with an equal devotion. The indescribable tenderness with which he worships this old woman has been throughout his tumultuous career as a secret and very precious plant that was ever sweet scented and in bloom. He bore great love to his wife, to his children, and there have been other things to absorb his affections. He has hated strongly; he has coveted ardently. But of all the passions of his life, none has attained the depth, none the purity of the love he gave to her who bore him; even yet, when he squats on the low chair beside her big armchair all other things in this world vanish from his ken, and mother and son are united in a very communion of souls.

He finds in her, not only her whose love has dominated his life, but what there is of good in himself. In her are incorporated all the souvenirs, the symbols, the images of which his flesh and soul are knit. Life has corroded, spoiled, used up much of it. What have they in common, that fighter

with the hollow mask, that stern financier whom all Paris fears, and the timid lad, sensitive, ambitious, who dreamed day dreams by the side of the mother whose insatiable eyes devoured him with caresses? What a naïve and pure heart he had in those days, what fine things he aspired to, what ardour possessed him for what is beautiful and good! What has the course of time made of these pure ambitions, that unsullied conscience? How that flood of mud has rolled over it all, has dirtied and deformed it! But one thing has remained inviolate, deep-rooted, intact: the son's love for his mother.

With the lapse of years their respective rôles have changed; it became his lot to surround with jealous, anxious care her who was so swiftly, so sadly falling a prey to the infirmities of old age.

The least of the attentions with which he had overwhelmed her was this little house he had bought for her, where she lived amid her souvenirs. And, however stormy the times he was passing through, however stern his battles, the son called up his mother on the telephone every day, and two days never passed without his crossing the threshold of her retreat. He left behind him at the gate all deceits, worries, hatreds, so as to appear before the old woman with the feeble eyes and the tender kiss, placid, radiating, happy.

Yet, far as she lives from the world, some faint echoes of its noise reach her and from time to time she feels a twinge of anxiety. It is said business is bad . . . and the children's health? Is it true that trouble is looming in the East?

Gently stroking the Persian angora that was rubbing herself languorously against his leg, Claude Harlier, in a quiet voice, comments on the things she says, explains, reassures her. Let the whole world be full of cries of hatred and groanings of pain; here, in this heart whose very God he is, where he reigns supreme, the man will use a divine lie to bring about and preserve security and peace.

Of course, everything is going on splendidly. Only sick or nervous people have cause for grumbling. The children's health? Admirable. Janie's cold was nothing at all. Max

is working much better, and really Anne-Louise is growing into a remarkably pretty girl. Business? Well, there are always minor hitches, but, if everything were to go smoothly, the process of earning money would become monotonous.

"As for politics, Mother, believe me, there is no cause for anxiety. When all were a prey to doubts during the war, did I not tell you victory was certain? We won the war; now we are winning the peace."

The old lady shakes her head with a sigh of satisfaction. Yes, it is true, her Claude has always been right in his optimism. He is wise, strong, upright. If only he would spare himself! A new anxiety reveals itself in her halting voice, and once more trembling hands let their knitting fall.

"And your health, Claude? Mrs. Leroy came to see me the other day, and she said you looked worn out."

Claude Harlier indulged in a frown and a gesture of protest. There are seemingly always a few imbeciles or malicious people ready to tear a hole in the fence he tries to keep so high and impassable round the dear white head. With his hand he teases the cat, that retaliates by playfully biting the finger that is tickling it. Then, smilingly, with a voice radiant with vigour:

"I never felt better."

"Quite sure?" There is a worried tremor in the old lady's chin.

"Take a good look at me."

The uncertain eyes, wherein light flickered but feebly fixed themselves on the man's confident face.

"No . . . I cannot say I think you look bad. But . . . I cannot see very clearly now, and, you know, every time some trouble or unhappiness lay in store for you, I have had a presentiment of it. Well a night or two ago, I dreamed of you. You were hiding your face in your arms, as you did when you were a wee tot and wanted to hide your trouble from me. I did not dare look too closely, for I feared the awful thing I might discover. Even if you feel perfectly well, Claude, will you not go and see a doctor?"

"I have been."

"Ah . . . and you did not tell me about it . . ."

"I wanted to give you a surprise."

The man suddenly stopped. It was as if a dagger were penetrating his chest, and a pair of pincers were twisting his heart within his breast.

"Ah! . . ."

The voice was a little startled: "What is the matter?"

The sweat of anguish was streaming down the unfortunate man's face. His fingers gripped nervously the material of his trousers. For fear of being observed, he crept a little backwards into the shade, and stammered:

"Yes . . . I have just been. You can be quite reassured. Says I'm as strong as a bull."

"Really?"

What a relief! Last night she had worried so much over this thing.

"If you but knew what a frail youngster you were and what trouble I had to bring you up."

And the mother related the childish ailments of the boy, perpetual colds, a bad attack of chickenpox, enteritis . . . ah, she spent many a night, watching.

"So, darling, you must not be angry if I sometimes bore you with my fears."

"Yes, yes, dear . . ."

The steel pincers have loosened their grip.

"Yes, yes . . . dear."

Bent over his mother's knees, Claude Harlier scolds her tenderly. Who in the Bank Boulevard Haussmann, or even perhaps in the rue de la Faisanderie, would guess that this stern voice could take on such gentle tones?

"Dearest Mother, I must know that you are quiet and peaceful, that you have confidence in me, as I had confidence in you. You must yourself help me to preserve and protect you."

The old head nods, and her lips tremble.

"Yet . . . yet, my child, there will come a day, there will . . ."

"Hush!"

The man bends over the poor deformed hands, with their salient veins and bluish nails. . . .

"Hush, Mother, hush . . ."

Yes, he is right, as he always is, this good, brave, happy son of hers. Why give him pain? Why sadden both with the thought of the inevitable that is to come? Since he is in good health and things are well with him, is not everything for the best in the best of worlds?

"Yes, Claude, you are quite right. I am content. Don't be late, dear."

He glances at his watch; it is only seven; no hurry. Still as he is dining out. . . .

"Better be going, dear."

He bends down again and deposits a kiss on her furrowed forehead.

"I will 'phone up tomorrow to hear what kind of a night you had, and the day after tomorrow, I will be here at six."

"Goodbye, my Claude."

"Goodbye, Mother."

The purring cat goes with him to the door, and Theresa helps him on with his overcoat.

"Your mistress looks pretty well tonight."

"Oh, every time she sees Master Claude . . . but you may have noticed her voice . . .?"

"Yes, it is failing visibly; the heart going groggy again. Well, perhaps the injections will help to pull her up." The aged servant has her doubts:

"At the Mistress' age . . ."

Yes, of course. But it is perhaps better so. If that heart of hers were too solid, what might not happen when her Claude would no longer be there to lie to her and comfort her when her heart would break within her?

In the big dressing-room adjoining his luxurious bedroom, Claude Harlier was dressing for dinner. His wife, dressing in the next room, could make herself heard:

"You did not have too tiring a day? How did you find your mother?"

He answers in the same pleasant, casual tone.

"And you? Your fittings, and your calls? May I come in and kiss you?"

Madame Harlier was standing in front of her looking-glass, in a lovely purple gown, shot with silver. A finely

proportioned neck, resplendent with jewels, rose out of the smart bodice. Gracefully, she offered her husband her skilfully powdered cheeks. He just touched with his lips the fringe of hair between forehead and ear, and exclaimed gaily: "My, you are smart! Going with Anne-Louise to the Opéra Comique, are you? Well, I must run. I'll send back the car."

In the anteroom he met Anne-Louise, looking very sinuous in a tight-fitting dress of shining silk with oriental designs. He spread out his arms as if to catch her.

"Come, daughter mine, let me admire you."

But, eel-like, she glided past, avoiding his grip.

" 'Night, Daddy. Don't crush me up. I'm running to see if Mother's ready."

Max appeared in a smoking jacket. He just lifted his eyes from a sporting paper, threw a hoarse "Good night" to his father in absent-minded fashion, and forthwith plunged again into a deep study of the afternoon's matches.

Janie, just a trifle out of humour, sat alone in the hall. On her knees was a picture book she gazed at with a little affection. She allowed herself to be tickled behind the ear by her father, deigned to smile in response and, returning his caress, whispered in his ear:

"Say, Daddy, is it next Sunday you are taking me to the Châtelet Theatre?"

Upstairs a door banged, and Anne-Louise's sharp voice could be heard: "All right, let dinner be served at once. We'll have to hustle or we'll be late."

The man struggled into his coat and went out, a stoop in his shoulders and his walk a little heavy.

VIII

The elegant little dwelling of Madame d'Estonne, in a quiet street near the Champs Elysées.

Madame d'Estonne was one of these priceless divorcees who are the pillars of Parisian society. Her dining-room had something of the raciness of a night cabaret, and her drawing-room partook just a trifle of the character of a *maison de rendez-vous*. Politics and letters, the theatre and

diplomacy, business and the world of fun were all represented there in tolerant mixup. The hostess was rich, beautiful, an amusing talker, with sufficient tact to manage her guests and sufficient imagination to amuse them. She kept a good cook, fine old silver, beautiful glass, low-necked gowns and important men, mostly with an order of sorts in their buttonhole.

In the discreet alcoves between the windows, manners are sufficiently relaxed to give such grave persons as senators, academicians and financiers a piquant sensation without their feeling embarrassed at being seen among her guests. The list this evening comprised one cabinet minister, a member of the Institute, an American oil king, two artists of neutral nationality, two Javanese, a half-caste and half a dozen delicious women unencumbered with any kind of husband whatsoever.

Claude Harlier was a frequent and welcome guest in this house. He had the double advantage of being a brilliant conversationalist and of occupying a prominent situation in Paris society. Moreover, so hard working a man well deserved a little relaxation. Being a pillar of society and a family man, he could not afford to run the risk of a scandal through compromising liaisons. But puritanism was not pushed to such lengths as to prevent him from seeking solace in easy, discreet adventures, enabling him to return refreshed to the office and the hearth. On his wife, his children and his business, he concentrated his affections and intelligence. But, as a man's years increase and his joys and horizons get dimmer, in order to adorn the rude pathway and hide the yawning gulf, it becomes desperately necessary for him to cultivate the illusion at least of youth, of pleasure, of forgetfulness.

Yet upon this evening, although placed by his hostess between a temperamental brunette with attractive eyelids and a languorous blonde, Claude Harlier did not import into the conversation that mordant wit that made him shine on such occasions.

It had been a day like many other days, but it seemed to have left him very tired. He felt as if, amid the laughter, the perfume, the light around him, shadows were mov-

ing dimly, heavily, veiling the beauty of the women, dulling the savour of the dishes, choking in the moment of their utterance his light epigrams and amusing anecdotes. His two neighbours were not long in feeling the effects of his mood, and the blonde turned gaily to devote her attention to the Javanese.

Madame d'Arlins, the elegant brunette with fiery eyes, made vain efforts to enliven the conversation, to bring her partner to take an interest in proceedings. It was the third time Claude Harlier had met her, and never had she had to struggle so hard to command his thoughts. At most she could have played but a transient rôle, as of a spark that shines for a moment, an hour of swiftly forgotten pleasure. But tonight, Claude, instead of gallantly assailing her, was letting the talk die of inanition.

The topic was theatres and spas. Vainly did she display her firm throat, her sensitive shoulders; the man was as if asleep. Was that the sword of Damocles he saw hanging from the ceiling? These silver dishes, were they from the feast of Belthazar? What invisible "Meneh, Tekel, Upharsin" surges up in front of him?

In a theatre on the Boulevard, a sombre Ibsenian drama had recently been staged. To the astonishment of the lady, he seized upon it, mangled it, ridiculed its stern philosophy, amused himself by contradicting and dogmatising in turn; then, suddenly, was silent.

After dinner, when people went to the smoking room, he let himself fall heavily into an armchair, heeding not the laughter, the seductive attitudes of the women in this tobacco and alcohol-laden atmosphere. The cackle of the parrots irritated him this evening. He listened absent-mindedly, letting from time to time some sarcastic remark drop into the conversation, snappy, creating a chill, provoking pained surprise.

"Really, my dear friend, I do not recognise you tonight."

He smiled, excused himself, attempted a witticism, then fell back again into his acid mood. Also, he was bored. The academician was holding forth. He emitted views on Stendhal and Balzac, and even on M. Nisard. Then he tackled the two politicians. In order to avoid embarrassing

the cabinet minister, the hostess led His Excellency away to admire her Chinese ivories; there were some, she said, whose erotic character was really quite curious. A trifle flushed, his eyes aglow, the statesman followed her. The lady tried to raise a blush behind her fan, and, amid peals of silvery laughter, gave him a few light scolding raps on his fingers.

Harlier found this sort of thing suddenly intolerable. He felt sick. He turned towards the door.

Before actually leaving, however, he turned round again. Madame d'Arlins was looking at him with a mixture of question, prayer and irony; a manifest invitation. He hesitated for a moment, let his eyes fall, then raised them again; but the young woman had already turned away in anger. The whiter of the two Javanese was pressing her closely as he spoke. She looked at him full in the eyes, burst out laughing, and Harlier overheard her say:

"Then you are not like that old man?"

He found himself in the street and walked a while under the stars. A sudden internal shudder shook him, likewise furious anger. . . .

"That old man, indeed! The impertinence of the woman!"

Ah, well, he had played the fool. He had asked for the insult. He had resigned of his own accord, he had run ahead to meet defeat half way.

A wave of pride came over him; he must have his revenge, the revenge of the male animal. He must have it at once. He turns round, hails a taxi, gives an address. In the neighbourhood of the Trinité, in a humble street, there is a door, well lit.

Claude Harlier put up the collar of his overcoat and entered the place. . . .

Ugly, shaky, the last of the old station cabs, with a tuberculous cabby on the box, was bringing the man back to the rue de la Faisanderie.

In this solitude, bouncing with the uneven tremor of the old scrap-iron vehicle on its tired springs, Claude was going over the events of the day. In his mouth there was the taste of bitter disgust as he thought of himself, as he was, as he had been.

There had been a time when he had represented an intelligence, a will, a force. He had dreamed of making out of these assets, by well ordered conduct, a creative element, a life power. He had resolved on a plan of action, instead of letting the days drift at will, as a tiny straw in the meandering stream.

What remained of that ambitious, vanished dream?

The Claude Harlier he had conjured up long since was diluted, had collapsed, a mere sand statue, to tumble apart in disintegrated fragments. Of so many faces his memory brings up before him, which is truly his? They pass before his eyes, again and again, pitiful, incoherent relicts. What in fine was he: pirate, coward, hero, or mere hypocrite?

Alas, something less than any of these: just a poor man, a bit of a broken-up derelict, roughly shaken by the seas, hustled hither and thither by the winds, cracking dismally before going down finally into the depths. Claude Harlier. He repeated the name. Yes, it had once been someone, but today the sounds have lost their meaning. They connote merely a handful of decomposing atoms, scattering, vanishing.

Claude Harlier was back in his home. With painful steps he went up the stairs, stopping on the landing to get his breath. Grappling irons are hooked into his soul, never so cruelly as now. With a supreme effort, panting, bent in two, he managed to climb the last steps and to enter his lonely room. Lonely, for little by little, by tacit consent of the married pair, it had become the sole repository of his troubled sleep, of his bitter hours of insomnia. He looked at an old photograph on the mantelpiece, in a faded frame. That young woman with the sad face, full of grace despite her old-fashioned dress, had been his mother, a mother who hung on to the world but by a meagre thread that might snap on the morrow. And that child, the boy in the sailor's suit, had been himself, for whom tender affection had dreamed the brightest of destinies. Of that child what remained? The spectre the glass threw back to him, this semi-dead man with deep lines, red eyelids, soiled linen, repulsive aspect. Does so great a fall not touch with its mud the sweet picture of the mother?

He looked at himself with distress, horror and pity. Then he turned away his head and put his hand over his eyes with a sigh that was a groan.

Pity? Yes, an immense pity . . . that is all the reward human misery can claim. What remains of this rag is far below the reach of sonorous words and eloquent anathemas. All that is nothing but rubbish, scraps, old iron; good for the dust heap, for must it not all go to dust?

Enough phrases. Closing time.

He undressed; from time to time he paused, holding his side with his hand, seeking a moment's immobility. The grip is tightening; unless he invokes the aid of that subtle poison, he will never close an eye this night, for all that he is so tired.

He took a box of cachets out of a drawer. They represented to him relief, but also further fall. "Use them only most sparingly, and in case of perfectly intolerable palpitations," he had been told.

But tonight, anything rather than to sink, with cold staring eyes into the hell of insomnia!

One little white cachet in a glass of water. He drinks. In ten minutes importunate conscience, unbearable consciousness will have been benumbed. The very thought was calming; he closed the box and put it in the drawer beside his revolver. Mechanically he took out his gun and stroked the butt of it gently. The last friend, who will not fail when flesh will rise and say: I can bear no more. . . .

But, so long as, in the little house at Auteuil, those dear lips shall not have closed in death, this friend's aid will not be invoked. Still, it is good to feel it at hand; it gives one a sense of security, to know that at one's bedside there is, ever ready, something of unfailing faithfulneses.

Claude Harlier turned the electric switch, and it was night. The beats of his wretched heart grew slower, calmer. Conscience sank into torpor. Out of the depths of the past, dim ghosts arose. His mother had taught young Claude a Name, and around him in the darkness he was conscious of an all-enveloping power; he had always put his young hands together and prayed for the blessing of that Power. . . The man sighed. His hands drew towards one another, his

fingers crossed mechanically as they had used to do. On the bluish lips of this man stricken with heart disease, this man of the world, of the hard struggle for life, of this Poor Man, there arose from out the back of his consciousness the remains of childish prayers that, bent over his cot, his mother had taught him:

"Dear good God, have thou mercy! Have thou mercy!" Then he slipped forever into the torpor that brings freedom whence tomorrow he will draw enough strength to hold up his head once more, till the last day, when he will go down colours flying.

Epilogue

The *Journal de Paris* of the Xth November, 192–, contained the following:

Parisians prominent in business, literature and politics assembled yesterday to give their last homage to M. Claude Harlier, founder and director of the Banque Harlier & Co., whom death has so suddenly taken away from the affection of his family and the esteem of his contemporaries.

We reproduce a few sentences from the magnificent oration in which Mgr. Laloue, Bishop of Saint Jean d'Acre expressed the unanimous feeling about the powerful personality of the deceased:

"He was a strong, just man. His whole life was devoted to work and to duty. The dominating note was his incorruptible simplicity. A spotless family life, a crushing amount of professional work, an untiring social activity, these things Claude Harlier succeeded in fusing into a magnificent whole. In other careers there are shadows and ruts. His was one of those straight narrow ways, beautifully adorned, leading without turns from a smiling cot to a tomb that almost seems to be radiant. He knew neither doubt, nor weakness, nor uncertainty.

"He was of the happy of this world, of those who, according to the testimony of their contemporaries, have been the brave artisans of their own happiness. His life will remain for us an example and an inspiration . . ."

In the apothegms of the Indian sage Wyndhya Baharani, one may read:

"The life of man is as a night between two nights. Blind men by the side of shadows. We live according to lies and we die according to reputation. No one knows anyone else. And that also is good."

KING ROSE

By PIERRE MacORLAN

(From "*Malice*")

THE first lantern ran along the deck of the ship as though moved by tiny invisible legs, for it was impossible to perceive the man who carried it, so thoroughly was he obliterated in the densely black night. A searchlight picked up the fugitive gleam and its light revealed the bearer of the lantern, a big wreck of a man whose haggard features consisted chiefly of three horrible holes—the eyes and the mouth. The nose was almost imperceptible and seemed to have been eaten away by some disgusting illness.

The man with the lantern cast his light on the man with the searchlight and the face of the latter seemed to be the absolute mate of that of the first. The three holes in the faces of each seemed to give them a kinship of corpsely origin.

Other lanterns moved toward the high poop of this ship—plainly a vessel of ancient date—like will o' the wisps about a cemetery. Against the starless sky the darker masses of the sails bourgeoned above the silent ship like swollen clouds before a tempest. The noise of the prow clipping through the seas was distinctly audible.

A sudden pattering of bare feet and the shaking of the ropes as they were jostled, was followed by a sudden outburst of lanterns which lighted up, one by one, like luminous flowers in the black fields along the banks of the Acheron.

In the light of the lanterns, the nocturnal sailors hoisted more canvas and ran up and down the ropes. This strange scene could well have passed for a funereal amusement in the land of dead souls. The agitation increased and the creaking of the pulleys mingled with the cries of the curlews as they skimmed the silvered crests of the waves.

To add to the gruesomeness of this marine travesty the

bearer of a searchlight raised it at arm's length, the light shot up into the inky sky, then shot along the deck, casting phantasmagoric shadows, grotesquely lengthened and then, equally grotesquely shortened in such a way that it was impossible to identify the owner of the shadow, who was himself, perhaps, only the shadow of a shadow. Sometimes a sheet of brightness, yellow as butter, showed flashes of copper, badly covered by rotting canvas. At the foot of the mast a trembling, worn-out voice was raised. The man sang:

Quand j'ajustais ta cocarde
Et repassais ton col moir,
C'était donc pour aller voir
Cette maudite Camarde.

He stopped short like a broken machine, and another man with a lantern chuckled. In a squeaky voice he finished the song.

The shrill laughter of the old men spread from group to group in the rigging and about the cannons which they were polishing. Shouting through a trumpet, an order brought them to attention. Because of the wind humming in the ropes all that could be heard of the order was a sort of:

"Oua, oua, ouao."

The boatswain's whistle called together the lanterns, several of which were extinguished.

Along the horizon a narrow band of livid light indicated the line of demarcation between sea and sky.

A cracked voice which might have been that of the singer, stammered:

"The starboard watch on deck."

There remained only one lantern on deck. A man said:

"It's day again."

The two lights of day and of a lamp fought each other in the chart house of the *Flying Dutchman,* the nocturnal crew of which was preparing to turn in now that the sun was about to reveal its golden mystery.

Carefully piloted by its navigators in the rapid currents which lose themselves at the poles, the big ship, eternally wandering, its lanterns dead and its searchlights extin-

guished, far from the lanes frequented by men, regained unknown seas, there to enjoy the daily rest without hearing the battle alarm or the shrill note of the trumpet recalling these living dead to their posts of combat. For the sailors of this splendid ship whose beams of hardwood withstood well the wear of time obeyed this captain who roamed the seas much as Juan Esparen-Dios or Bouttedieu wandered over the plains and through the woods and cities, without encountering a trace of novelty.

The captain's name was Peter Maus. He was a native of Dusseldorf and had, two hundred years before, been immobilized by Death which had granted him the features of a corpse-like ancient and left him the clothing which he had worn in life, at a time when he had been in the service of Holland. At that time it had been his wont to spend his money thoughtlessly on the girls of Amsterdam. Ever had he been ready for a good debauch replete with gross enjoyments.

The love of a good woman, which should have saved him from his destiny, had failed to triumph over this destiny which ever dragged him toward new adventures, each of which seemed to offer greater promise than all the others. And now, alone with his secret, in the midst of his crew, he sailed in company with a hundred damned souls and a few imbeciles who had been surprised into coming aboard this great ship of despair.

The mate belonged to the same generation as the captain. He was a Norman from Dieppe, named Pierre Radet and known as "Little Pierre." He knew Peter Maus's secret and, like him, looked forward feverishly toward the hoped-for rest. In the solitude of the chart house, hung with maps of the world and compasses of a model long obsolete; with heads bowed they studied the marine charts, ever searching for that which, once for all time, would free them, would grant them the true death, the repose eternal.

But divine currents, despite the accuracy of these mariners' reckoning, ever drove the *Flying Dutchman* farther from shipwreck and the end. The requisite number of men having been assigned to go on watch during the day, while the rest of the harassed crew rested in the forecastle under

the pale northern sun, which spread a great sheet of golden flakes over the sea, Peter Maus and Little Pierre felt the need of food and drink. But their mummified organism was unable to respond to their craving. A fierce hatred animated them against the world and against the old life which they had led among the living. They clenched their fists and took delight in conjuring up tortures to be reserved for the living if, one day, the grace divine would permit them to mingle with life.

In their sacrilegious carelessness these madmen implored the aid of Heaven without realizing that they were so doing.

"Oh! God!" they stammered. "In your limitless bounty grant that we may encouter a living person, one who is fat and comfortable and well supplied with the world's goods, that we may torture him and make him suffer to our hearts' content."

And childishly they added: "Grant that we may eat bread and sausage, oh God, if only for once!"

Then Pierre Radet, known as "Little Pierre," took an empty bottle and two glasses from a chest. He aligned them carefully on the table and wiped the glasses on the corner of his coat. He pretended to fill the glasses with wine, and then each brought the glass to his dried lips and made a pretense of drinking.

Each laid down his glass. They cast the bottle on the floor where it smashed.

In an access of self-pity Little Pierre began to weep: "Don't break that damned bottle; for God's sake. Soon we won't have any more bottles and then we won't even be able to pretend to drink."

Sometimes they puffed away at long clay pipes and, their hard eyes sunk deep in their cavernous sockets, they recalled to each other the "good old times" and indulged in a bitter hatred of life, that life so full of pleasures, every gesture of which, in their distress, they sought to recall.

"After considering the matter thoroughly," said Little Pierre, "it is better to be dead, for our weak point, when we were living sailors, was going ashore in port. We were shaken down by the girls; in one night the product of six

or seven months' work disappeared in the purse of Ninon the Breton."

"And don't forget Angela Cecchi of Palermo," said Peter Maus.

"Ah, yes. Angela Cecchi and her little inn at the foot of the Pellegrino."

And again they lost themselves in their memories. One after another they evoked, from the depths of their fleshless skulls, a strange lot of images, some vague, some with an absolute perfection of design.

"God does exist," declared Peter Maus, "and who can doubt now, that we are damned for eternity? Long ago, when I was a child—I have lost my taste for counting how many years ago that was—I believed sincerely in God, but I was sure of nothing. I said my prayers like the other children, out of precaution and in order not to overlook any chances. Since then, I have acquired the certainty of the great divine power."

"Then according to you, Maus, we are going to sail the seas without making port throughout eternity?"

"I would certainly like to eat an orange," said Maus, smacking his dry lips like an old leather purse.

"You fool!" replied Little Pierre, shrugging his shoulders.

He extended his hand to the bottle and both pretended to drink. They were shaken with crazy laughter. "Here's to you, lad; your own health, sailor," they repeated, clinking their glasses.

Little Pierre arose. Staggering like a drunken man, he cursed the sea, men, and things in general.

In the forecastle, the crew heard smilingly the long familiar invectives of the two old men.

Balanced in their hammocks they were not sleeping. They, too, were pretending to sleep because they were dead men and all the day long they dreamed with anger of well defined images and unaccomplished desires.

Once again, the sun plunged into the cold waters of a sea of the extreme south and, with the first stars, the men of the watch descended. Their heavy boots clumped against the ladder of the Sainte Barbe; the night life was going to recommence and, against the chance that they would

encounter a ship sailed by living men, they removed the canvas coverings from the cannons and placed on the deck at the foot of the mainmast, muskets and cutlasses with large blades and crude wooden hilts. The boatswain's whistle recalled the men to their posts. Several, almost skeletons, were hardly able to stand against the wind which puffed out the sails and others, twisted in painful attitudes, resembled vine roots.

Toward midnight, the blind lookout, who had been stationed in the crow's nest as a joke, shouted hoarsely through his horn. But already the crew of the *Flying Dutchman* were regarding open-mouthed a terrifying luminous apparition which was coming straight at them with the rhythmic hum of a hearty beast.

Long rows of lights decorated the sombre mass of an enormous boat. The men of the *Flying Dutchman,* silent, regarded this magnificent and perhaps liberating vessel which was even more phantom-like than their own.

"It's the end," shouted Peter Maus suddenly. "Boys, we're really going to die. Thank God on your knees, boys, like me." They kneeled down, lowering their faces in the hope of the great catastrophe which would put an end to their wanderings.

A distant explosion was unable to make them raise their faces, and suddenly a huge spout of flame sprang from the steamboat. A shower of débris of every sort rained upon the deck of the *Flying Dutchman.* Instinctively, even though they had nothing to fear, they protected their faces in their arms.

When they reopened their eyes the sea was deserted. Where the great boat had been there was nothing but white water.

Peter Maus shook his fist at Heaven, and the blind lookout, high up among the sails, chuckled.

A faint wail, coming from the sea, silenced everyone; it was plainly a baby's cry. It was easy to imagine the baby waving his little hands and feet.

"Lower the tender," ordered Peter Maus.

The old pulleys sqeaked. And not far away in the sea the baby cried again.

II

In a strong odor of iodine, seaweed, and rotting wood, the tender was brought aboard and with it a tiny baby, its head covered by a bonnet, its face rosy and its little fingers in a state of perpetual movement. It appeared to be about ten months old. Its big round eyes, unfrightened, contemplated the funeral faces of the dead men surrounding it.

"Heavens!" said Little Pierre, "it's a living child, plump and healthy."

The living dead pressed closer about the child, regarding their prey with eager eyes. They examined it with a grand exaltation, but their expressions revealed nothing of their intimate thoughts.

At daybreak Peter Maus and Little Pierre, who had installed the child in the chart house, sought to decide by what means they would bring it up. The ship, peopled with dead men who did not eat, contained no provisions.

"This child is thoroughly alive," said Peter Maus. "As a living person can he live among dead men? I don't think so. But we could kill this child and the little dead fellow would bring some gaiety among us because of his gentleness and the good care we could give him."

"This child is too small to amuse us," replied Little Pierre. "Let us raise him until he is ten years old; at that age, on the day of his First Communion (he crossed himself) we will kill him and we will then have a lively little dead boy who will be able to brighten the aridity of our endless toil."

"Your idea is adopted," said Peter Maus. "And it is upon wrecked ships and vessels terrorized by our presence that we will hunt for the wherewithal to nourish this little milk drinker."

A large French newspaper published in its columns this bit of curious information:

Shanghai, July 10, 1921—The Japanese cruiser, *Nogi*, returning from target practice, encountered, outside the Bay of Along, a ship which was drifting, lights out, in a southerly direction. The customary signals having been flown, the

commodore gave the order to stop and arm the crew of a whaleboat, who boarded the mysterious ship.

They found that the ship, a Swedish freighter, had been abandoned and completely pillaged. Not a morsel of food was found. A curious detail: in the officers' mess the table was laid and bits of meat were rotting on the plates.

It is difficult to imagine the motives which caused the crew to abandon their occupations immediately. At the same time it seems to have been due to some maneuver on the part of the Bolsheviks.

This bit of information, although read by thousands of readers, failed to arouse the attention of the crowd. Its atmosphere of adventure was a little superficial and it was not long enough to be highly interesting. At the outside, the discovery of the cruiser *Nogi* might have been made the nucleus of a peculiar novel but could not possibly have held the attention of the serious-minded.

No one in the world, even among the most credulous who sail the seas, could have suspected that, at the bottom of this mysterious drama, lurked a little child, rescued by the everlasting damned crew of the eternal phantom vessel. A survivor of the adventure, had he been encountered in a wind-blown bar in some coastal port, could have told, after several generous glasses, how one night in the Pacific his ship had been attacked by an invisible ship lighted up by innumerable lanterns. And, had such a one been encountered, he would have been heard with the respect due to a first-rate story-teller, but no one would have believed a word of the yarn.

The *Flying Dutchman,* commanded by its skipper, Peter Maus, sailed hither and yon, and flew the black flag in place of the flag of its country of origin. Often in the middle of the night the shrill trumpet sounded the battle alarm: fifty lanterns were ever ready to run on deck.

And the *Flying Dutchman* surging from the shadows, would launch its adventurers upon the quest of the food of the living.

The child prospered among the dead. Little Pierre kept him hearty and chubby with the aid of cans of condensed milk. Sometimes a coverlet would be spread on deck and,

in the light of the searchlights, each would come and stare at the baby rolling about on the soft wool. And the dead, beside this pink child, resembled stones or bits of old furniture. Sometimes portions of their skeletons would show through the dried, stretched skin. They nicknamed the child "King Rose" and, in truth, he resembled those fragile yet robust roses which bloom in the old cemeteries around the little churches of poverty-stricken villages.

King Rose grew and repeated dutifully the words taught to him. He was able to express himself a little in all the languages which he spoke in their obsolete forms.

He played by night, leaping about familiarly over the lanterns or mounting to the crow's nest to tease the blind lookout who was eternally worried about him.

He would roll about on his back like a cat, catching the dead men by the ankles and would shout: "Hey, there, old fellow, give me my stick."

And the dead men were amused and would think: "What a nice little dead fellow King Rose will be. Then throughout eternity our spirits will be enlivened by his pranks, his words, and his shouts."

In the chart house, between the old map of the world and the marine charts illuminated with their allegorical depictions of the winds and before the piles of canned preserves, gathered from pillaged freighters, young King Rose, kneeling on his bench, listened faithfully to the monotonous councils of the captain and the mate.

"Why is it," the child asked, "that you are so different from me, and that you have such a funny odor? You don't eat like me and you don't drink milk mixed with sweet water?"

"It is," responded Peter Maus, "because you are living in the Kingdom of the Dead. Here on this ship we are all dead."

"What is a dead person?" King Rose inquired.

"You would not understand."

"Oh! I wish I were dead like you, like Little Pierre, like Gruida, the boatswain, and like Loiselet, who plays the flute. I wish I were dead so as to have a handsome brown skin and be able to make the bones of my hands

click together. Then I would run around the deck with a little lantern."

"We were once nice pink children like you, when we were alive."

"Do living people live near the English?" the child asked.

Peter Maus gave up trying to explain the double mystery of life and death. But each day King Rose heard him cursing these enigmatic living persons whom he accused as being responsible for his damnation.

Some nights, in the diabolic light of the lanterns, the dead danced, shrieking abominable menaces at the living. Having pretended to drink, they imitated the excesses of drunkards, lit fires in the empty cups and, voluptuously, their gaping mouths drank down the yellowish green flames.

Young King Rose was twelve years old at that time. He presided at these parties, astride a cannon. He kept clapping his hands, delighted at the spectacle which, for him, attained the highest perfection imaginable.

"Some day I, too, will be dead like them," he thought, and his youthful breast swelled with pride.

III

Dressed in a suit of scarlet cloth, which had belonged to Peter Maus, and which that ingenious dead sailor had cut down for him quite becomingly, King Rose had procured, as well, from Little Pierre, who had spoiled him, a little lantern which he brandished at night while galloping along the worm-eaten deck of the *Flying Dutchman.*

He loved this sly life of dramatic appearings and enjoyed the horrified faces of the poor mariners, surprised at sea by the rapid passage of the marvelously punished ship.

But above all he enjoyed himself, when, squatting on the poop ladder, he heard the dead damning the living.

The child had arrived at the stage where he considered these mysterious living persons as cruel beings, ever ready to tell a dishonest tale, and as being persons of whom one must beware at all costs. Later, thanks to the discourses of Little Pierre, he developed an odd idea of life which his infernal surroundings could but fortify.

Life appeared to him as a far-off catastrophe, so far away

that the distance seemed unbridgeable. But he had a shiver of fright whenever he thought of it. Otherwise his youth hardly permitted much serious reflection.

Thus he was growing up in the heart of this legendary ship without any point of comparison which might have given him an opportunity to appreciate his exceptional situation more reasonably.

And Peter Maus, regarding the youthful grace of the child, who was thriving on the fish which he now caught skilfully, conceived the notion of expiating his own fault by a decent action.

He said to Little Pierre: "Lieutenant, the more I think the matter over, the more I come to the conclusion that Providence wished to test us when it sent us this little living being on a wrecked ship. Don't you think that we would be serving its ends by returning this child to life? To be sure the presence in our midst of a gay little dead boy would lessen the bitterness of our destiny. But I do not think that God could have placed him in our path for this purpose. What do you think?"

Little Pierre joined the long bones of his fingers over his knees. "I think as do you," he replied. "We must land the child and perhaps this action will bring us some divine favor."

"Very well then, we will land him tomorrow night on the coast, yes, we'll land him on the Breton coast near Auray, on holy ground. We don't want to overlook any chances."

"You old rascal," Little Pierre chuckled.

But Peter Maus straightened up. "Cross yourself, cross yourself," he howled. "Blasphemer, Judas!"

They fell on each other and their arms, coming together, rattled like sticks of wood.

The next day, a little before nightfall, Peter Maus called King Rose to him and, pointing to a band of grey along the horizon, said to him: "There is the land from which you came and to which you are to return. You can no longer remain among us. God does not permit of it. I have often spoken to you of God in anger. I was wrong, for I was speaking like the rest of those damned souls; you will realize this later if you ever come to our state. God

Almighty gave you life; we cannot make one of the dead of you."

The child wept: "Let me die at your side, O Peter Maus, and I will imitate Loiselet whistling in his flute to make you laugh."

But Peter Maus shook his head and the child, torn by despair, threw himself on the deck crying heartrendingly.

"You ought not to have warned him," said Little Pierre in a bad temper. "It would have been better to land him without telling him anything."

With the fall of night the Southern Cross came alight.

Every sail tugging at the halyards, the *Flying Dutchman* sped away from the Tropics before the supernatural drive of the winds. Soon the peaceful harbours of old Europe came in sight.

The dead men, ranged along the rail, looked at the child, shivering with fear in his scarlet suit of ancient cut. The lanterns on the deck indicated each shadow, though revealing them poorly, but all the light fell on King Rose with his livid face and chattering teeth. Then there seemed to be a shifting of the sails and the rowboat could be heard bumping against the sides of the ship.

"Come on, King Rose," said the captain. "Say goodbye to us and pray for us. Here is money for tapers. The first woman you meet will tell you what to do for the repose of our souls."

"I don't want to live," shouted King Rose. "Let me alone, let me alone, Peter Maus!"

The child was lowered into the boat and Peter Maus took the tiller. The oars squeaked in the oarlocks. Soon a black line curled about in a semicircle.

"Attention! Back water, everyone," Peter Maus directed.

The boat cracked at every joint. "Row, starboard oars," said Peter Maus. The bottom of the boat scraped on the rocks and Peter Maus, on the lookout, stepped over the rail. The water came up to his thighs. He took King Rose in his arms and waded ashore.

The night seemed filled with a terrifying whistling. "Don't be frightened," the dead man explained. "It's only the wind in the trees."

He placed King Rose at the edge of a white lane running inland, then made for the waiting boat with long strides.

King Rose, paralysed with terror, made not a cry. But, as the boat drew away from the shore so as to regain the *Flying Dutchman* at the first possible moment according to the decree of Heaven, the wail of the child could be heard and it seemed like the cry of a dying man bewailing his fate.

"Goodbye, King Rose," Peter Maus shouted once more from where he stood erect in the boat.

THE CHILD OF A HUNDRED YEARS

By PAUL MORAND

(From "*Candide*")

WHEN I learnt that Diane, thanks to the passport of a poison, had crossed in her sleep that badly guarded frontier which stands between us and death, I experienced no surprise. "What are we?" her foolish and perfumed philosophy must have told her, "what are we but a temporary gathering of cells which have had the common and unnecessary experience of having composed our body? Sooner or later this chance experience must come to an end, and each 'atom' will recommence to follow its own particular destiny."

It is not the fate of all such chance experiences to be as successful, however, as was that which was Diane. She was often eagerly described as stupid; but her mouth was so red that everything she said appeared to me to be intelligent. She was perfectly beautiful; and no doubt it was because of this that she was afflicted with a malediction, of which the causes were obscure, but the results evident.

Diane could not believe that anything was real that was not herself. The painful but consoling sentiment that we all form a part of humanity, and even of an ensemble of worlds, never succeeded in taking form in her consciousness.

She was one of those beings who, without having a sorrow—one of those women's griefs to which each one is able to give a name, or at least a Christian name—have absolutely no desire to live.

She had been like this from childhood. Diane had grown up in a universe in which she had no confidence; and thus in her twentieth year she fell into that state of neurasthenia —as the novelists of the nineteenth century termed it—

which twelve months later brought about her end. Her soul, losing all its weight, slipped away from the earth, like a balloon released by the hand of an absent-minded child.

I took part in one of the last incidents of her life, which was, perhaps, since she passed away very soon afterwards, her final effort not to yield to the fatal vertigo of inexistence. I tried to save her. I lent her a helping hand—from self-interest, it is true, seeing that I loved her; but it was in vain.

Quarter to eleven in the morning is not a very unusual hour of the day, but at the same time it is in no way compromising, and it is a moment at which one arrives with pleasure, no matter what one's age may be, if only one has not done what one ought not to have done the night before. On this particular day, then, when I came down into the hall, I was like the hotel itself, open to all comers.

The palms in the lounge had been washed leaf by leaf; the hall porter, freshly shaved, instead of being on the defensive and replying "No" to everything, was acting as a gilded connecting link between the varied desires of each suite; recently awakened by the vacuum cleaner, the colours of the flowers in the carpets glowed like new; the *maître d'hotel* was preparing for luncheon as though he were going into battle; no cries of agony arose from the basement from gentlemen whose fingers had been made to bleed through the efforts of the manicurists; finally, as the last word in harmony, the helmeted telephonist was at his post and was charging at the head of the numbers entrusted to him.

All this is equivalent to saying that any joy that could now unexpectedly befall could bring only an excess of happiness and leave nothing to be wished for but catastrophes. The confirmation of this appeared at the door of the elevator—Diane.

She found herself caught between the pleasure of meeting someone for whom she confessed to having some liking and the need of safeguarding a liberty for which she had, after all, no use.

I saw at once that she was about to say, "My dear boy,

I can't see you now—I have several places to go to—I'm leaving tomorrow" and, getting in first:

"Dearest," I said, "I am so sorry I can't stay with you now! I've such a lot of things to do! I'm going away tomorrow!"

Diane's face brightened up immediately. Her eyes softened. Like the cat, she would willingly stay with you of her own free will, provided you did not seem to want her to do so.

"Then, of course," she said, "you are able to devote a little of your time to me!"

She had seized the hook.

Thus, with her perfect dream of a hat, with one of her cheeks a little pinker than the other (due to her mirror, which was not well lighted on both sides), her skirt fitting close as a bandage, her scarf tied upon her shoulder, Diane started on her way to her death.

Under the pretext of quoting Emerson, I took her by the waist:

"From whatever aspect we regard Nature, Diane, we see only the visage of a disguised man."

"That man is a woman," she replied, "and that woman is me. My life is a party to which I invited everybody, and nobody came."

She was a victim of the old philosophic error which she had made her own—between her lips her pendant, the finely-cut sapphires in which she daintily bit with her finely-wrought teeth.

"If I die, the universe dies too!"

"Don't do that, Diane! I hate women who suck their pendants, and men who play with their keys!"

"Give me a reason for going on living!"

Ever since I had known her, I had frequently tried to help Diane escape from herself—to escape from that narrow universe into which she had shut herself from pride, the pride that, much more than the taste for pleasure, ruins women, and especially the best of them. I gave her the key of the fields, we wandered together through the pastures of the soul, I translated her dreams, I assured her that the supernatural was only the natural for which no explan-

ation had yet been found, I persuaded her to look outside of herself, among the arts, the crafts, the figures and the fashions of the world.

On this last day I spent with her, I explained to her the origin of Chartres Cathedral, the art of Bénin, wireless telegraphy.

For a long time, however, Diane had no longer been listening to me. Her gaze had become fixed, and she had retired into herself again. When I tried, in my turn, to follow her, I was kept outside.

I threatened her. I warned her that this lack of adaptation would be fatal to her. I told her how easy it is to be haughty and aloof. I wasted my time in citing myself as an example, clinging to anything and everything in order to float better, refusing to place any value on symbols, never rebelling, taking everything as it came.

"Therefore be vulnerable, Diane! Be mortal! Recognise sentiment! What do you think of love?"

"I beg your pardon?"

"To love is to put yourself in the heart of things."

"At the heart of things there is always myself."

"Diane, you are a statue in stone, a monolith, an aërolite!"

Diane closed her ears to my words, whereas other women, when one speaks to them of themselves, are like lizards when one whistles and stand motionless and listen.

I decided to take a stronger line:

"If you refuse to love me, Diane, I shall kill myself!"

"That you will never do!" she laughed; "the knot of your tie is much too well tied! . . . No, I am only cruel, believe me, towards myself . . . But, wait a moment . . . this very morning, why not take your chance? Count three! . . . Good. Now, show me three things—three people, three scenes, three knick-knacks, anything you like, at your own choice. If these succeed in moving me, if you can perform the miracle of making me take an interest in something beside myself, if you can make somebody else reply for me to the torturing questions I put to myself and provide some interest that will enable me to shake off my thoughts, I shall be grateful to you."

"What do you mean by that?"

"You will see."

Diane was one of those beauties which have need to be lighted from within in order that one may admire them. As soon as she became animated, I was vanquished. She suddenly revealed herself to me as direct and stirring.

I called for a taxicab, and the hotel porter, like a blue blackbird, began whistling in the street.

"Caledonian Market!" I told the chauffeur, without hesitation.

After twenty minutes' drive over the black-surfaced road, we reached a huge square paved with stone and divided into stalls with wooden railings. It was very much like what it seemed to be—the cattle market, except that on this particular day the cattle were replaced with other objects. It is in the Caledonian Market that the London junk fair is held every Friday. Everybody knows the weekly fair in Rome, near the Tiber, where tongs and second-hand chasubles are to be found; that of Madrid, the world's market for old keys and cigar stumps in zinc trunks blue as the wings of tropical butterflies; the junk market of the Boulevard Richard Lenoir in Paris, which is not very abundantly supplied, for French families sell less of their lumber than those of any other country in the world; lastly, the Flea Market in Petrograd, where one finds, in spite of the snow, old eighteenth century folio volumes, illustrated with black engravings by Eisen. The Caledonian Market is worth all of these put together, for London is the market of the unknown, the city of chance.

Before one, on the ground, are spread out, like the beard of the Ancient Mariner, on squares of matting, collections of pipes, of gothic telephones, broken plates, rusty golf clubs, imitation pearls, infirm armchairs, worn-out boots suspended by their laces. At the stall of one of the merchants, who sheltered his waterproof clad figure under a pink parasol covered with black lace and whose pipe was turned upside down in his mouth because of the wind, and who was selling not only a furniture polish like Cheshire cheese and lemonade of the colour of chlorine, but also knives, beer mugs and paper weights, I had the good fortune to come across one of those glass globes known as "panorama balls," which

reflect, while distorting them, anything that may be placed in front of them. Contorting and deforming anything that is reflected on their sides, these balls concentrate objects and light in their centres with the intensity of a diamond.

In order not to influence Diane, I said, addressing myself:

"Old junk, far from fatiguing one by its accumulation, has excessively tonic properties. Shoe buckles, boats in bottles, paper flowers and especially things made of glass not only, whether taken individually or in the mass, constitute poems in themselves, but are a secret means for the initiated to express themselves, to confess and to tell each other secrets, in the open street. I want to sing the beauty of looking-glasses, of every fragment of a mirror, of the smallest scrap of glass that has a morsel of quicksilver attached to it! I think I shall very shortly organise a society, which I propose to call the M.L.A., or Mirror Lovers' Association . . ."

"Your imagination is fertile," rejoined Diane, "your sentimental life is active, and your intellectual life . . ."

". . . is nil!" I completed. "I remember hearing a lecture on the soul of the Negro once, in which exactly the same thing was said."

"You certainly rather remind me of Negroes, for you are amused by everything that shines."

I held the globe out to Diane, as she stood by my side, and we saw ourselves reflected in it as microcephalic monsters, under a cupola-shaped sky. All the laws of light and of sight were deformed and contradicted in this bowl.

"Could anything be more alluring?" I asked. "Look at it—you are beginning to come back to life already. That is what you feel, isn't it, Diane?"

"No," she replied.

"Ah, you don't appreciate the magic which lies in this skin of quicksilver over a sheet of glass, which recreates and rectifies everything! With a mere mirror, you double your capital automatically, as the tipsters say. What isn't there inside it?"

"All I see in it is myself," responded Diane.

I acknowledged ruefully that the first defeat fell to me.

We returned to our taxicab and eventually, after a very

roundabout drive, we reached a piece of waste ground in the southeast of London, which was overlooked by Shooter's Hill and in the middle of which a country fair had spread itself out like a rash of many colours. On the outskirts of this fair was standing an ancient motor car, a Ford, with a perfectly unbelievable tonneau, which constituted a veritable surprise packet: it was so arranged that when, at certain times, one of the sides, which was adorned with some very striking pictures, was taken down, the car was transformed into a shop. On the car was painted in red letters:

CHARACTER READING
Highest Testimonials

and below, in a bold running hand:

Mrs. Taylor attends all race meetings.

Mrs. Taylor herself was attired in the style beloved of the coster girl—black apron, straw "sailor" hat with a rose stuck in it, long earrings, a necklace of black pearls, the colour of which was killed by her skin. Her nose was highly coloured from too frequent use of gin.

"Hullo, dearie!" she called out, cheerfully.

"Look into the crystal for this lady," I told her, "and try to see nothing in it."

"Another glass ball!" murmured Diane.

"I see a white cloud—it melts away. You will lose a lawsuit," continued the witch, fixing her eyes on the crystal, "a strange kind of lawsuit—it seems to be an action brought against yourself—and your adversary doesn't seem to be a very dangerous person—but you will lose . . ."

I smiled in triumph.

"Clairvoyants can only read our own thoughts by their roots," said Diane, "whereas we never see them ourselves except from above. All that your friend Mrs. Taylor has seen in this dirty yellow crystal, my poor boy, was myself once more!"

It was evident that nothing I could do was going to take my companion away from her own dark thoughts. I had not succeeded in obtaining the relief I sought for her or in procuring that assuagement which she seemed to expect from me. So far two of my experiments had proved failures.

What should I be able to do for her in the few minutes that were left before we must part? What star could I show to her? What perfect, unique, unperishable object that might, while restoring my credit in her eyes, bring about her recovery?

I thought of an electric machine, of a dagger (but that was in the Bargello at Florence), of a Jesuit compass for measuring the stars (but that had been brought back from China and was in Berlin).

"If I fail," I thought, "I shall lose her forever!"

Then the idea came to me to take her to the first floor in the British Museum, to the Mexican room in the American antiquities' section, and to show her the crystal skull.

Under the concentrated light, the skull almost blinded us. It is seldom that one can thus find oneself in front of a single pure idea that has taken visible form without being either dulled or diminished by it.

Imagine a drop of frozen water in the form of this life-size skull, carved from a single block of perfectly polished rock crystal, with the teeth indicated by a line, the only line to be seen on this pure diamond; the eye sockets, instead of being full of shadow and of dread, were wells in the depths of which glowed a clearer light than that of the brightest eyes; the head, lighted from behind, from above, from every side from which could come the light that nourished it, concentrated in the heart of the crystal, where ideas formed themselves. One felt that this skull would continue to glow with the same fire even through the night, so surely did it appear to create its own radiancy.

"It is a Polar scene!" cried Diane, eagerly feasting her eyes on the icy block, like a woman regarding her own resemblance.

"Confess that at last I have found something that has taken you out of yourself!" I retorted. "This head was brought back from America by Cortez and presented by him to Charles V. It is a sonnet by Mallarmé, an iceberg discovered at the Equator . . . Every year I come to London solely in order to see it again . . ."

I ceased to speak. Diane held herself near me as if deprived of life.

"It is wonderful! but . . ."

I interrupted her:

". . . but although I have provided you with the rarest possible occasion for passing from the abstract to the concrete, to force you to reconcile yourself with your period, to demonstrate to you that the most sombre thought, that of our final end, may be transformed by art to the clearest and most luminous of things, not even this will convince you?" And I added, with irritation: "My word, Diane, how poor you are! how old you are! Do you remember the verse in Ecclesiastes: 'The child of a hundred years old shall be accursed'?"

With a sign of the head, she replied "Yes." I took her by the hand, and she left the place with me without a word.

"You are not going to tell me, Diane, that in this thing of crystal you also met yourself?"

"Yes," Diane replied. "I saw myself in it—dead."

THE FEAR OF BEING USELESS

A MAY NIGHT'S DREAM

By the COUNTESS OF NOAILLES

(From "*Les Innocentes*")

SYLVIE refrained from loving. She feared to lose her freedom in the intoxication of love. This freedom consists in feeling that one depends on all things, but not that all things depend on one single being, who may take it into his head quite suddenly to inform us that he is going on a journey, or going to get married, or has ceased to love us, or is going to be a priest or has resolved to be honest henceforth or even simply to grow old—carrying away with him our entire thoughts, our home, windows, horizons, bed, breakfast and all complete. For it is surely a great misfortune, and one that takes complete possession of one, to feel suddenly that all the necessary things of life have changed or have slipped out of one's reach, simply because a man has gone out of the room where he was talking with one, in ill humour, or without leaving his address.

Sylvie felt obscurely that her will had no part in shaping the decrees of Fate, a personage who carries love and death in his winged hands and mostly lets them fall clumsily, so that everybody in the crowd of mankind gets wounded in the process. Yet she felt, too, that it was a worthy thing to do to fight against desire, and that she would never give up being the wide-eyed sentry of eternity. These feelings of hers made up a contradictory state of soul, for the only time is loving time.

One day it was revealed to her how deeply she was bored. For a long time this had been hidden from her by the beauty of the world, which by its wealth of colours intoxicates us as with alcohol, and by its silence pleases us as much as a magnificent concert. Yet since her marriage, no man had appealed to her sufficiently to induce her to leave these vague contemplative spaces where promises

intensify youth and power. The delight of not having yet made a choice, when one is full of strength and imagination, is an immense experience, which one must needs give up as soon as one decides to give up all power to the favourite of one's heart; there arise in this way two figures, alternately giant and dwarf, each endeavouring, as saith the poet, through mutual slavery and sly combat, to be "the one of the pair who is not destined to die."

So prudent Sylvie was in no hurry.

However, there is no lasting power in so pacific a state of mind. You cannot sit on the saddled donkey of Fate without the animal start trotting, or kicking, or throwing you forward onto its neck, or stretching out its head to snatch from the hedge some white May blossom that appeals to it as a vanilla cake to you, or hurling you cruelly backwards, rolling on its back in whimsical fancy through the dust of the road. Such is Fate! Impossible for that young donkey to keep still, with firm legs and stiff back, and his heavy sympathetic countenance three-quarters turned rearwards, as if, together with his troublesome human burden, he were posing before a landscape painter . . .

One fine summer's evening, Sylvie came to understand that, be she ever so prudent, such an immovable existence was both wrong and unreasonable.

But, since she was troubled at the thought of altering the sweet sovereignty of her childhood, she performed an act of faith, in all confidence, in a charming spirit of letting herself go. Stretched out in bed, her mind positively bathed in gentleness, she inclined her head on the pillow towards the open window where the immensity of the night seemed to be framed on a reduced scale, and uttered the following prayer:

"O thou summer's night, in order that I may decide to live, which my heart seems reluctant to do . . . in order, too, that I may get cured of the anxiety occasioned me by the thought of death . . . I pray ye all: thou peaceful wind, thou clock that strikes the hour of eleven on the front of the municipal building, thou harmless whistle of some young man going along the street at this late hour, above all thou summer's night laden with thought . . . godmother

of the morrow, I pray ye all that ye may so order events that something may be revealed to me; something crueler than either Love or Death . . .!"

Little by little she felt herself being dragged down into sleep by the weight of her brow, as if some nymph were drawing her under the waters by gently pulling on her hair.

Dream, Dream in person, not merely through his naïve, inexperienced messengers that dull all plans and colours and carry to your closed eyelids vain and troubled images, but the Master himself, full of wisdom, friendly Dream, drew near to Sylvie, moved by the prayer the young woman had prayed to the night.

And this is the substance of Sylvie's dream, as vivid to her as evidence itself, a fact Pascal touched on when he wrote: "If we were to dream nightly the same thing, it would affect us profoundly as the things we daily see. If an artisan were to be sure that, for twelve hours every night, he would dream he was a king, I believe he would be almost as happy as a king who, every night, for twelve hours, would dream he was an artisan."

She found herself suddenly transported into a sober but splendid habitation, where lived an aged, childless couple. Daylight only reached the scene through stained glass, and this gave it the appearance, half of a temple, half of a museum. It is a curious thing that wealthy collectors are nearly always careful to exclude the sun from their drawing-rooms and galleries; they reject its natural splendour freely given to all men. Anxious that their knick-knacks and their own skill in getting them, should alone shine before men, they dispense with the penetrating light of nature, not realising that, deprived of the joy, the movement, the vitality that comes from light, the baubles they exhibit are but as phantoms in exile.

The man and the woman, seated dully in a corner of the huge room, were contemplating their equally dull treasures with practised eye; looking for all the world like paid guardians of these vases and enamels. They gave the appearance of being less capable of loving their amassed riches than of defending them from the mysterious aggression of the sun.

This wealthy man, short, thick, with baggy cheeks, was not so much seated as deposited carefully on the generous and exquisite silk couch where he was breathing, or rather inhaling so gently that it was almost imperceptible. A leather and ebony chair, or a mahogany armchair padded with green velvet might have offered him a decent and comfortable support; but the soft gilt sensuousnesss of the regal piece of furniture that gave rest to his vulgar and sad stoutness, gave him an air of being utterly lost in offensive marvelling. His wife was dry and commonplace, but had writ on her face the initiative and authority of which her husband was so obviously devoid. She sat, by coincidence, between two of these fine fifteenth century statues of carved, shining, dark wood, that seem as if steeped in the oil of many flowers that Esther used to bathe in; representing angels or madonnas, poetical conceit had given them an air of virginal maternity wherewith to enhance their maidenlike features and their delicate and pious hands.

Above the lady of the house, above her artificial mop of eternally blonde hair, hung dimly a pastel of the time of Louis XV, happy age when women, come to twenty summers, used once and for all to kill old age by powdering their hair with white.

Guests and friends were arriving. On these dull, confident faces, there was no beauty to be seen, no tenderness of any sort; they formed a group the stiffness of which reminded one of a petrified dancing party. None of the persons present could have been coupled with another without irony, for they were merged in a common beatitude of boredom, and death itself would, in Lamartine's words, not have found among them those clasped arms which she seeks at times when with one dart she wishes to pierce two hearts.

No love in this bitter company; instead, there was merely a collectors' interest, strong, no doubt, of its kind, and with an illusion of vitality.

The skirts of the women, the cloth trousers of the men, rested and encroached upon quaint chairs where, in painstaking tapestry, the Fables of La Fontaine were set out, naïve and instructive adventures of the Brook, the Sheep and the Wolf. Charming tales in silk and wool, joyously

tinted, but sadly interrupted by the human opacities they bore.

The hostess presided over her friends and, by firm, sober converse, sought to strike sparks on the anvil of their hearts. She became animated, excited; she swelled visibly; by degrees she attained such a pitch of passion that her trenchant words seemed to tear the air; her looks were lightninglike and her whole person assumed the attitude of an Amazon, standing up in a fit of defiance and defense. The topic was politics. She was in the grip of public affairs. The men and women, moved to interest in their turn, approved her sentiments, each with the variations proper to his or her individual nature.

The faces were so contracted, the sentences so deliberate, resolution so seared into their expression, that one might well have believed the good of the State, its reforms and the evolution of its laws to depend solely upon these tormented souls. They studied in common the situation of their country, their fate and that of the world. Heavy responsibility seemed to attach to their acidly wakeful hearts; some of them bore the responsibility lightly, with an easy bravery; others took it up with reticence, an instinctive desire for more reflection, for supplementary inquiries. Like the detonator of a dynamite cartridge leads to its bursting, so their hesitant choice and final decisions seemed to lead to the explosion of some ominous and significant event.

Error! Chimera! Illusion. Nothing really depended on the talk of these idlers, busy with thought and dupes of their own sterile words. These unemployed dictators were merely experimenting, trying, groping, without substance or end, as a trial from which the judge is absent.

By her anxious, yet absent-minded attitude, the hostess summed up their collective vanity.

Her enigmatical figure greatly intrigued Sylvie in her vision, and she inquired from the Dream what its significance might be. To which the Dream made answer:

"She is possessed by the fear of being useless. A rebel against love in her youth, a rebel still against that other form of love that consists in feeling oneself united by one's

hopes, experiences and ills, to the innumerable family of suffering and fighting humanity, she assembles around her, in an atmosphere of barren wealth, other creatures who, like herself, are afraid of being useless. When they separate, each of these triflers will go find his pleasant meal, his elegant room; they will ever seek each other, ever try to come together, to dissipate their secret sorrow, to escape from the dizzy terror of being of no further use . . ."

This cruel drawing-room where anxiety and bitterness had created a palmless, waterless desert, vanished from Sylvie's ken, and the Dream transported her to a more modest dwelling, frivolous and gay, where literature was being dabbled in. There ambition and criticism were to be found, together with ingenuous envy and perhaps also a genuine hankering after a noble end; but effort is not action and virtue is not salvation.

A discussion was proceeding. The first words Sylvie heard threw her into an angry astonishment. Never had she imagined it to be possible for anyone to question the genius of Sophocles, of Shakespeare, of Victor Hugo. Just as, sacred and intangible, the Milky Way, the Great Bear, Mars or Saturn sparkle in the night, so she had ever seen genius brightly lit in the firmament of human thought. With all her soul she believed that the human mind, steeped in divine ether, can no more be displaced from its height than the stars from theirs. In her early childhood she had derived considerable amusement from seeing a cartoon representing a dishevelled student, sunk in the unique armchair of his garret, one foot up on the cold stove, supporting with the hand a troubled forehead, an open book fallen to the floor by his side, and, according to the caption below the picture, remarking: "Shall I read Faust over again, or shall I write something myself?"

These poets who filled Sylvie's new vision had apparently written something themselves. They read out their effusions, born of strange loves out of solitude, with the one and only impulse of a thirst for glory.

Whatever might be the intention of their poems, their complicated harmonies, their sly purple patches, these works led straight into nothingness.

Never would by means of their charms that divine poetic temperature arise that transfigures the air and fills it with blessings, that holds men enthralled before the miracle of thought in terms of music; never would they occasion that wonderful feeling of the startled, trembling gazelle, listening in the spring of Asia, in the meadows where the young irises are awakening to glorious life: the springlike miracle of poetry, imposing on the conquered soul its moods, its fancies, its laughter and its joys.

These pretentious fakirs of versification whom Sylvie was listening to, disdained the secrets of rhythm, that swift mobilization of sensitiveness. Their inspiration was like the Morse code, made up of interruption and continuity, the sum of which but makes a long, uniform, dull trail. Besides which the shining lights were contemptuously engaged in reproaching Alfred de Musset and Henri Heine with having dared to feel and to express their feelings—a crime that, in their view, deprived them of any claim to the title of artists. And Sylvie heard this, she who offered golden sacrifices on the altars of Alfred de Musset and Henri Heine! She saw them radiant in their lyric beauty, as travellers drunk with the charm of the lands they travelled, meeting in the Baden country, on French and German highroads, exchanging greetings from the bottom of a black and yellow diligence, with a raising of their tall hats and a gesture of the proffered hand that pledges their hearts, while with each shake of the clumsy vehicle the moon dances at the door, and above the scented mass of the forest reigns the cold serenity of the stars.

She blessed them and loved them, as one loves a sweetheart, a faun, a gondolier, an Andalusian, these two passionate young men who had at least not had to invent their luxurious loves, their romantic journeys, their soulful cries, their joyousness, or their penetrating sadness. Wonderful, both, superior to any of their readers, the one bitter, the other candid, both sincere, intoxicated with Italy or Spain, perverse perhaps and loose living, but as all excess of life is perverse, as the sun at the hour of noon, or the wine fermenting in the first September jars. And Sylvie remembered, too, their moments of divine purity, when

their crystal-clear vision seems to capture the song of birds, the freshness of the lily of the valley, the azure depths of a lake, cool and replete.

How she resented in her dream the barren debates of these rhetoricians who, by labouring hard to deny genius, sought to drown their fear of being useless!

And, dreaming, she turned her head sadly, and had her attention drawn to a picture on the drawing-room wall that seemed, like herself, the living, passive victim of such culpable conversations.

The beauty of immovable things greets confidently a respectful gaze; it diffuses itself in a succession of calm waves, rising towards the eyes as wafts of perfume from a flower bed, unceasingly renewing themselves without exhausting the field of their birth.

What was this picture from the soul of which such tender beauty rose and revealed itself to Sylvie?

A sky of spotless purity: blue, polished, hard. To left and right two clouds had formed, opaque but slight, and remained there, as white cherubs, contemplating the turquoise expanse of the heavens. On the desert soil, tanned by the sun, stood a modest, orthodox building. It might have been some town house, hard baked like a piece of earthenware, in a country town near Angoulême or Arles; or else some sleepy post office, quiet as a nunnery, where letters or parcels are so rare that they make the postmaster start. Gazing upon it dreamily, Sylvie conjured up the parched soil of Spain that but touches the heart as you touch a lighter and sets up a very fire of poetry, or even Africa, in its state of eternal siesta. So frightful, in his quiet manner of telling his tale, is the simple, divine Corot. . . .

At this juncture, just when she was being transported by the Dream out of this pedantic drawing-room, Sylvie nearly made a fatal mistake.

Deceived by what she had seen of Words, for she had just made the double experience of it, she thought they were necessarily vain or hurtful. So, when she was led in vision through the noble halls of the Schools where wisdom, conscience and free thought express themselves

through the mouth of men laden with love of their fellows, she muttered in her sleep: "They, too, only talk for fear of being useless."

But the Dream objected: "Nay, not these. My dear daughter, mistake not: this is a powerful, active love, of one man for all men, a blessed use of speech, that is the alpha of all things, that upholds the universe. Here Words are saturated with sense, replete with the wisdom of the centuries; in a movement as well ordered as that of the stars, they draw the mind forward to the future. These men on the further brink of life, whose words you hear, are filled with inexhaustible joy. They know, they teach, and through a blessed modesty, they learn ever. They are shrines of resurrection and of hope. Forgetful of circumstances, of tiredness, of want, they possess the world of actual facts and of future probabilities. Their death will hardly be death, for they are the willing servants of the time present and of the time to come. Having loved all things, they are destined to love without end. To their enchanted vision nature is complex; the forget-me-not that, like an earthly sky, springs in April out of the western soil, yields to them, through sweet association, the sage of Virgil and the cytisis of Meleager. As old men they are yet loved of the nymphs, sent to them by the rows of books in libraries, the homes of the gods' romances. Dreams are the reward of hard and honest work; let us hear them speaking to their attentive audience, Sylvie; they talk out of love, they convince by example and the only fetters they impose are those of freedom . . ."

And soon the slumbering Sylvie attained the conviction that love alone, whatever its sorrows, its deceptions, its tragedies, was worth devoting one's life to, since all who have despised love or have been abandoned by it, wander thereafter aimlessly, driven on by the fear of being useless.

But she asked herself, anxiously, why men die. She found death cruel, unjust and absurd.

So the Dream introduced her into a dark room where, through the open window, the summer night poured in, lit up with the silver of the moon's slanting disc. On an elegant bed a young woman was lying, quietly, pale-faced,

breathing but slowly; her hands lay open on the pink satin coverlet, hands that seemed forlorn, like the quiet limbs of a sleeping animal, for human hands can never be peaceful: they have fought fate too much for that.

"Ah," asked Sylvie, "what is the matter with this touching creature that she seems at once so poor and so rich?"

And the Dream replied: "She has lost the man she loved, torn from her by death. She has accepted an early death; let us not disturb her. Her pale, icy lover left her a torch that was out, and in her turn she will have none of it. From day to day since the fatal separation, she has languished, instinctively fighting down her misery, but now she is slowly, gently becoming exhausted. Mad when she saw the terrible paleness of her unconscious lover, she became yet more insane when she had to consign him to the earth. Nevertheless she showed courage: for a while, for a long time, for weeks, she gazed up at the clouds, in the vast starry places of the night, in the blue June morns that roll on radiantly like a huge wave of azure. She listened to the bird rejoicing in little cries on the resinous green-tipped trees of the forest; she saw the rivers breathing their mist over the plains; she looked upon that universe that had been, place for place, the scene of their happiness. But neither here, nor there, nor anywhere, did she see aught of her lover. At this moment, she is full of a light and silent exaltation that is in itself an agony. She is thinking of her dead one, and she wishes to die, for she wants to be like unto him.

"She does not believe that he is in heaven, for she cannot imagine wings on that lost one whom she has known so proud and strong, so deliberate, active and powerful. She who loved him saw but too distinctly how they bore him into the earth, him, now but a lifeless corpse, yesterday her master, of whom she was the happy prey, the joyous plaything. She well knows he rests in that strange dwelling place of the soil, doomed to infinite weakness, vanquished and derided by insolent life. What has broken her heart is not being able to share his fate. So strong is her craving to be like him that death to her is not annihilation, but a calm and divine meeting again. Let us not disturb her,

Sylvie, for here is a woman who is on the way to happiness."

Sylvie thus came to understand that death may be gentle and that it is often necessary.

She slept on till morning, without her torpid brain recording any further clear impressions, for the Dream that teaches and had led her that night, having accomplished his task, had gone to carry to other sleepers his strong and vivifying knowledge.

The whole of the ensuing day, Sylvie was happy and content; a day of clear summer, when the sky wears its three softest colours: azure, pink and gold.

Just as the sun was setting and paying his visits to the houses of men, knocking with his burning rays on the window panes that seem likely to break into silver fragments, Sylvie received, as not infrequently, the call of a young friend. She felt much sympathy for his pleasant face where it seemed as if the grave look were doubly steeped in the soul. She had always listened with appreciation to the lively voice in which intelligence was so well marked.

But she no longer felt for this friend any friendship. Horrid word, friendship, detestable sentiment between young man and young woman! Friendship in such cases means a secret but constant awkwardness, an unconfessed defiance, a barren effort; it amounts to courteous indifference, lack of communion, error and deceit.

No; she no longer felt friendship for him; she loved him. Love is born like the dawn, preceded by halting, troublous lights. But the amazement produced by its sudden and flaming palpitations far surpasses in silent jubilation the loud sunlight of noon.

There is truly a moment when love proposes itself to the heart of a woman, when it invites her without violence. It is rather a query, implying deferent and delicate investigation. One may believe she is free to make up her mind; in reality she soon consents. What to? To the enigma. They consent to the atmosphere, the ill-defined mystery, the highly-coloured prayers, noisy yet sweet smelling. No consent thereafter will have the same candour, the same swing of brave sacrifice. When once that moment is passed when Nature, like a skilful, playful mother has given them

counsel and assurance (for they must be assured, so self-re-creating are the innocence of the feminine heart and its timid sadness), women find themselves suddenly gifted with slyness and virtue, out of which they make themselves an armour of invincibility.

They then possess a happiness that is mad with its very extent and is mingled with misty glory. They learn to know the change in step of those who, after descending a stone staircase, climb into a boat and feel under their feet the adventurous instability of the waves.

Swaying to and fro on their new element, they are happy without knowing why. One feels happiness before one can experience it. That is a fine distinction, but for women one of capital importance. It contains that morsel of the infinite which they will not find again till later, in suffering.

The young man also had in all sincerity dubbed friendship the feeling that drew him to Sylvie. But the pleasure he experienced in her presence, the feverish animation of his life and thoughts as soon as he breathed the same air as she, the firm certainty that nothing else mattered save the perfect bliss of enjoying her manner and her speech, these were not friendship, but a rung on the ladder of angels. On that rung the young man, active and vigorous, maintained himself respectfully, chastely, without its occurring to him to look at his watch, for he still had the strength to do so.

But Sylvie felt herself being urged by internal voices. She felt that she, too, was standing on that rung, but less securely than he, and she experienced a sort of irritation and fear at the thought that he might remain there indefinitely, on that rung where he felt perfectly happy, but where she was beginning to falter. Nervous, sensitive, impatient, Sylvie understood with all the sureness of her young pride that the fine look of the brown sun-kissed fruit that were his eyes, the beautiful firm lips, the delightful, lively hands, which she contemplated in turn with thoughtful distress, would never move unless and until she gave her formal consent to their moving. How to do it?

She had the choice between two irrational manifestations: untimely laughter and inexplicable tears. To such passes of discomfort are women, in their delicacy, reduced!

Of the two, laughter was the better. A sorrowful, constrained, ironically silly and indecent laughter. A laughter that jerked itself out as tears would have done, in an effort to free a modest heart on which a novel mission was imposed by the world.

The young man looked upon this mad conduct of his cherished friend with stupefaction not unmixed with condemnation. He thought she must be unwell, for his sober and respectful temperament made the idea that she might be undergoing temptation out of the question. He sought to serve her and well knew he was not capable of doing so. With the best intentions, but clumsily, he seized hold of Sylvie's wrists; he held her immovable, hurting her without having any idea he was, but wishing above all else to stop the source of this laughter, which to him was as alarming as if it had been blood spurting out of an open artery.

New surprises of innocence! Rout of self-ignorant passion! Denial of the soul, though happy, rebel hands remained clasped! Like inexperienced gladiators, they had presumed on their strength; they had held each other in a hostile contest that, by a sad but delicious surprise, revealed itself as a mutual, astounding weakness! How to undo these clasped hands that had only become clasped through an essay in authority and healing? What explanation could Sylvie give of that revealing laugh, to the youth who, no longer ingenuous, guesses confusedly the truth? They felt themselves alone in the world, raised far above all that had yet been, thrown upwards, devoted to fate.

Sylvie was logical even in her secret exaltation; she did not condemn this laughter that she felt had been necessary, and by which she had drawn down upon her the intoxicating energy and anger of the young man. Yet the poor young things, full of trouble and astonishment, unclasped their hands, that, by a tender and mysterious influence, had acted as conductor for their deepest life force. Each found himself again and each felt weighing down on him the soft burden of a first sin. They bent their heads near to one another, not daring to question, vanquished and enlightened at the same time by that moment of honest combat. Ah, if

powerful Sylvie had, in that instant, not unconsciously desired, beyond life and death, the forefelt happiness, her companion would have succumbed in an infinity of scruples, heavy with regrets and shame.

To what excess of remorse can a youth not be carried, who loves and respects a frail woman! Perhaps would he, back in his lonely room, after a night of tears, covetousness and repression, have penned to Sylvie a farewell letter; one of those letters adjudged to be sublime, which, by their deceiving honesty, their ingenuous loyalty and their priggish counsels, wound the female heart as would the blunt knife of a schoolboy, a nasty, malignant wound. Perhaps he would then, the next day, have gone to Marseilles, and there jumped on some steamer bound for the South. Perhaps he would, there, burned up with fever, have worn out his life in some coffee or ivory station, affronting from time to time the traitorous bullets of native guerilla fighters. Perhaps, adamant to all appeals, he would never have come back!

For the mere fraction of a second, Sylvie contemplated all these knightly and awful possibilities. An immense strength lay in her, together with the intuition that so many far-off and romantic proofs of noble love had no business with her immediate and unhesitating affection. So she assumed the leadership of this nascent adventure; a drunk pilot, maybe, but a prudent one.

It is even possible (what can we know of it?) that a fine glimmer of humour may, briefer than the career of a stroke of lightning, have passed through her contemplative mind, have illumined her serious passion, that lifted her out of herself, that made her uncaring about risk, immune henceforth against dangers and death. . . .

Man is a more fearsome animal than woman, and, according to the immortal dictum, "seeks to persevere in himself." Despite violent desires, he is distrustful of these darts of love, that not only wound the heart, but pierce the brain and nail a free man to the stake by his head, which is a common form of torture by savages on their condemned foes.

But what could the proud youth with the fine look do

against Sylvie on this milky summer night, lit up by a dreamy moon and by those silent white watchers, the petunias on the balcony?

The poor couple were tenderly, sadly embarrassed. They gazed at each other desperately, not knowing where the soul was to be found. Like two culprits conscious of an unknown sin, or like two orphans, they wept together; not separately, at a distance, but in each other's arms, on a lukewarm, bare shoulder whither Sylvie had enticed her delicious friend.

She fought against the young man's attack for just as long as was indispensable, then she, who had been the confused organiser and rash author of this blessed plot, accepted—had to accept—despite the amazement caused by such mad excitement, the unexpected at long last unchained passion of her companion. He no longer paid attention to her but emptied all his thoughts, all his strength, all the ancestral instincts imbedded in him, on the bursting heart of the girl. He would have torn out her soul if he had felt a desire to do so.

And she complained of nothing. She did not even feel she had a right to complain ever. With how many years of servitude, slavery and care, with what sorrow of the heart and what hidden tears do not women pay for that one decisive minute of their lives in which they exercised their authority in love?

The clock was striking eleven on the front of the municipal building; the usual passer-by, going home unthinkingly through the silent street, was whistling to himself; the scented wind, now sighing, now fresh and short, was balancing himself agilely between the moon and the flowery balcony. The two lovers, satisfied, tired out, feeble unto death, lay stretched out silently side by side.

Roughly, the young man laid his fine, wild face against the delicate shoulder where he had met defeat and which was now so entirely his that he could, an he had wanted to, have branded on it with a hot iron the mark of the galley slave. Sylvie, overfull of bliss, lay in immovable happiness; her thought, usually so brisk and active, knew not even the slightest shiver.

Happiness had established itself in her mind; nothing moved in it. She lived like a bird hovers, like a silvery stickleback remains motionless under the sheen of the water. Time had stopped for her, or at least was dragging itself out into an infinity of peace.

Her dream was peopled with images of content and satiety. There were landscapes in it that for long years she had seen loveless, and from which she had asked in vain: "Why are ye so beautiful? What shall ye give me? If ye cannot come down to me, help me climb up to you. Ah, if I but knew your secret!" These wonderful landscapes, she had possessed them, she had eaten and drunk of them on that dear face that seemed made for her, so like was it to her taste, that seemed to her as the magnolia seems to him whose favourite among all flowers is the magnolia.

If you believe that tenderness, in Sylvie's case, was inferior to flaming passion, it may not be amiss to tell you in confidence that, since five o'clock that afternoon, there had not been an instant when she had not wished to die for her friend. So powerful in its ending is an affectionate sympathy!

Through the open window, space took possession of the happy room. The evening air was scented as an orange tree; it brought to these two brave young things, palpitating joy and the approval of heaven and the universe.

When they left each other, rising from the couch where it seemed as if the effluvium of loving souls held them captive, there was no need to tell each other that they would meet on the morrow; for they knew all of each other's thoughts.

The attempt at experience, and the success of it, had certainly been hard on Sylvie: the storm, the high waters, the tempest, even the succeeding calm, wherein the universe mirrored itself, had far surpassed all she could have imagined. Yet, that night, she slept easily, her mind wrapped in thick beneficent darkness, unvisited by the Dream. . . .

THE GREAT UNREST OF MAN

By GASTON PICARD

(From *Le Mercure De France*)

THE thought that he did not know in what circumstances or in what manner his death would take place began to worry M. Boule.

He decided that science might throw some light on the matter and he bought a map of the five continents of the world, which he studied.

The question of place was the first to be solved. Yes, but among the many places on the globe where should one begin? M. Boule reflected that, as he had resolved never to leave France again, it seemed certain that he would meet death in his own country, in his own city, Paris, and in his own district, the Champs Elysées. He abandoned the map and took, as the next object of his studies, that part of the Champs Elysées which might be the scene of his last agony. He was not optimistic like the happy souls who set aside, as impossible, all suggestion of accident or crime. A taxicab could very easily annihilate him, thought he, or an *apache* assassinate him.

M. Boule then meditated upon the various corners in his quarter most favorable for the insolent skidding of a limousine or the pitiless revolver of a thug. He inquired the opinion of his acquaintances in the street: policemen, grocerymen, café waiters, flower girls and newsboys. He was fearful of pursuing his inquiries among the chauffeurs and robbers themselves, but made up for it by consulting certain tables of statistics at police headquarters which were open to him by virtue of his political influence. On a plan of the district he marked with a blue pencil the spots which, during the course of a year, had been particularly noted for accidents and crimes.

But he said to himself that "tomorrow one might occur on

a spot heretofore reputed peaceful." In a thousand and one ways he went over the district in which he had spent all of his life.

M. Boule was unmarried, and although rich was without servants. He showed the results of his studies to a friend, who suggested simply, "If you wish to be certain, commit suicide and leave a will to regulate your affairs after your voluntary death."

"That's too easy," protested M. Boule.

"Then pay an executioner to kill you, and——"

"Not another word! Have I a right to interfere with my destiny? I belong to Fate. She alone holds the secret of my final escape from life."

"Ask the ouija board."

But M. Boule did not believe in spirits.

"Consult a fortune teller."

But M. Boule did not believe in tea grounds.

"Then," concluded his companion, "eat, drink, laugh, sleep, love, in short, *live,* and forget your curiosity."

"I cannot," groaned M. Boule. "This curiosity is really the cause of the great unrest of men. The anguish of the individual and of the masses is combined in the thoughts from which I suffer. I am a victim," and he lowered his head.

"You ought to see a doctor," advised his friend.

M. Boule dismissed this simple soul. He abandoned himself anew to his researches. He would make a list of places, one of which he would choose as the one which the sum of his labors had authorized him to prefer.

He made notes:

Street crossings A and L (accident)
City district X (crime)

putting the places with the maximum of violent deaths to their credit at the head of his list. Then he added, fruit of an inner groping which sprang up spontaneously in the dust of a simple nature: my bed (illness), the arm-chair in my dining room (indigestion).

The days passed, he staggered under the burden of his fetish, when he met, at the Alcazar d'Ete, a certain Blanche-Camille, with whom he formerly had been in love. She was

living only a few doors away. She invited him to come and see her, and soon he was ringing her bell. She welcomed him tenderly, and M. Boule's chest expanded. She understood very little of what he said, but she overwhelmed him with attention. With the best of grace M. Boule accepted a tiny cup of tea and two *petit fours* without imagining death by poisoning, an ample proof of his distraction. He voluntarily offered a banknote to Blanche-Camille, who was complaining of the embarrassments caused her by the high cost of living, and when he departed he promised to return again.

Lightly and carelessly he put his foot on the next to the last step of the stairway, where he stumbled, fell and fainted.

When he regained consciousness, the concierge who had picked him up and put him on his bed, the doctor whom they had sent for, and Blanche-Camille whom he had called, were surprised that the patient seemed so happy.

"But didn't I escape killing myself?" asked M. Boule, in whom this thought had been working even in the haze of unconsciousness.

"Indeed, you did," they replied in chorus.

And the doctor explained: "You escaped with a scratch, but your head struck the ground in such a way that a millimeter more and you would have cut open your temple."

Blanche-Camille began to cry. Her nerves had given way, but M. Boule attributed it to her love and caressed her hand. He questioned the janitor, "To what do I owe my fall?"

"Alas! Monsieur," the concierge excused himself, "it is a flaw in the next to the last step of the stairway. The edge projects up a little and your heel naturally caught on that inexcusable projection. Everyone who comes down those stairs is a victim to it, even the people who live here—isn't it true, Madame Blanche-Camille?—Even I! Happily, until today, everyone has been saved by quickly reaching the bottom. I do not know how it is that it was worse for you."

"Science will teach us!" interrupted the doctor, and he showed, by reasoning worthy of a master mathematician,

that the proportions of M. Boule's body bound him positively to have a serious fall.

M. Boule was smiling. Oh, how M. Boule was smiling! But how his face darkened when the concierge spoke of planing off the offending projection——

"But the trouble is," said the concierge, and M. Boule resumed his smile, "the trouble is that this house is the object of a quarrel between two claimants to the property, and since the law has not yet given jurisdiction to either one or the other, neither one has the right to make any repairs, however necessary. About this step, I'd be running the risk of incurring a fine if——"

"Certainly, certainly," agreed M. Boule, and his friends did not doubt that in the fall he had lost his mind.

"So this is the way," mused M. Boule, once on the street, "that Fate has warned me. I am to die because of a fault in a stairway. I know the place, the circumstances, nothing is left but to fix the date and the funeral arrangements."

He was sure that having escaped death once under such miraculous conditions he would never escape a second time —A millimeter from the temple!

His conscience bothered him. Since he knew the danger inherent in the next to the last step of that stairway, there was nothing left for him to do but to avoid it. If he did not avoid it, he was looking for death, and that was suicide, the means which he had recently rejected as too easy.

M. Boule entered into debate with his conscience.

He emerged triumphant, saying:

"It is not suicide, but Fate. Fate has placed me on the road to my destruction and I must follow that road—or rather, I must descend that stairway."

Once home, he ate with a very good appetite, seated in the armchair in the dining room, knowing that no indigestion would carry him off. Then he consulted his calendar of engagements to determine on what day he would die.

"Tomorrow is too soon—so is the day after—I shouldn't be ready. Thursday? H'mm. I have an engagement with my friend, Ulysse Patacoque; I cannot refuse the game of billiards to which he invited me; besides, I want to see this good Ulysse once more. Just fancy! I won't tell him a

thing. He is a sentimentalist. He would throw himself at my feet right in the café, before everybody. Friday? Blanche-Camille goes out every Friday, she told me; she goes out to visit her old uncle. That can't amuse her much. But she respects her family, little dear! Saturday?—holiday—not good. Sunday? I won't speak of that. It is the day of rest, they might think that I had done it purposely. Monday then? Oh, yes! Let it be Monday. They will bury me on Wednesday."

M. Boule repeated the date many times. Its definiteness staggered him:

Monday, March 24.

He underlined it with a cross. Then he went to bed, in the bed which would surely not be his first bier.

During the days which followed M. Boule was very busy.

He went over his will, making Blanche-Camille his sole executrix, on condition that she give her concierge a little income.

He destroyed the love letters which had filled up the post offices in the days of his courtships, some photographs and some old locks of hair, and the manuscripts of the love lyrics he had written without literary aspirations, which, unlike authors on the point of collecting their posthumous works, he was shielding from posterity.

Now that he knew the place of his death he was free from the labors that had bound him at the beginning of his researches. He visited those spacious gardens which the dead share with the flowers, admiring the shade of this one, the location of that one, determining, at last, upon a third because of the abundant rosemary. M. Boule loved rosemary.

But he wished to know about the comforts of the place, so he sought the caretaker.

"How do things go, here?"

The caretaker answered phlegmatically, "Not so badly."

"So much the better, thank God! One is happy here, then?"

"So, so."

M. Boule looked at two tombs lying very close together.

"A little crowded here, perhaps?"

The caretaker, stroking his chin, looked toward the little house where he lived.

"Oh, yes. But one gets used to it."

"Oh! One gets used to it?" said M. Boule, scenting some liberty of administration harmful to the retirement of the corpse. "How is that?"

"Well, the little ones sleep with the big ones."

"Sacrilege," exclaimed M. Boule. "Sacrilege!"

The caretaker coughed defiantly.

"What are you going to do?" he asked. "Two goslings can be near the goose with a third one, without evil. There they are now, look!"

Three beautiful children were coming out of the cottage; they were devouring slices of bread and jam, with every sign of animation and life.

M. Boule dared not insist, and dreaming of that plot which he had chosen for his, in accordance with all means in his power, he gave the indifferent caretaker instructions on the place where he wished to be buried.

"You understand," he said, "one can never tell what may happen."

He knew exactly what was going to happen, but the lie tasted sweet on his tongue.

From there he went to the office of Bourru & Co., undertakers.

A clerk received him. M. Boule wished first to take up the question of the coffin. He had the excellent taste to pick out one whose wood matched that of the stairway which would cause his end.

On the subject of size:

"The same as mine," said M. Boule.

"Your distress is pitiful, Monsieur," remarked the clerk. "You have lost a twin brother?"

"I was born an only son," said M. Boule. He ordered a funeral of the second class. He wrote down the contents of the letter of instructions. He concluded, "I will pay you at once."

"We can wait, Monsieur," protested the clerk with perfect courtesy.

"It is because I cannot wait, you see."

Gently he touched his name written on the index of the letter of instructions, "I am M. Boule, myself."

The urbanity of the clerk gave way to an excessive familiarity.

"You are a great joker!" he cried. And he slapped M. Boule on the back.

But M. Boule insisted, and to make it clear showed his card. The clerk laughed until he cried. M. Boule impatiently took from his purse a bill for a thousand francs; he placed it in the hand of the chuckling clerk.

"That's good! That's really good!" With increased laughter he added, "If you are going to leave the world so soon, Monsieur, is it worth while to give you your change?"

It was his way of jesting. But M. Boule, without taking it amiss, replied:

"I beg of you."

Then the clerk stopped his contortions. Instead he wept copiously, he swore that M. Boule was the best of men, and that he would be unconsolably grieved by his death.

He begged the great man to do him the honor of shaking hands, and he swore between sobs that he would count it his duty to arrange the funeral of his benefactor and certainly to assist at it. With his attention the ceremony would have the *éclat* of a masterpiece of style.

"Count on me, Monsieur. You will be satisfied."

And when M. Boule was leaving:

"Good luck," said the clerk.

M. Boule, out of respect for the place, did not say to the holy men at the church where he ordered a Mass that this Mass would be his own. But at the end of a confession in which he had omitted none of his weaknesses, he begged the priest to pray for the peace of his soul. The priest thought this a bit premature, but he promised, so as not to hinder what he believed to be a divine ecstasy.

M. Boule went to the florist where he ordered a wreath of red roses. He could not resist the temptation of leaving this card: "To myself, very sincerely," so much sympathy did he feel for himself. He entrusted his head to the experienced hands of a barber. He allowed himself the luxury of

a complete bath. He went to find Ulysse Patacoque in the park. He won all the games of billiards.

"I have no ill feelings," said the loser, "for you are a good friend, Boule."

At this cordial statement, M. Boule asked:

"And if I died would it hurt you?"

"Very much, Boule."

"Thank you. Suppose that Monday was my last day, and two days after they were celebrating my funeral, would you go?"

"I would be the first one there, Boule," cried Ulysse Patacoque spontaneously.

But then he corrected himself, "Wait a minute—no, two days after would be Wednesday; and I have bought a ticket for a matinée at the El Dorado by a troupe of dancers which will be very amusing," he said.

M. Boule realized how little loyalty men had for their friends. His joy passed into discomfort. Brusquely:

"Adieu," said he.

This word, on his lips, took on its literal meaning.

Monday, March 24.

M. Boule was late in getting up. He wilfully prolonged his sleep. "I will be overtaken by eternal sleep," he thought.

He regretted no less the warmth of the sheets. When he had swallowed his chocolate in slow gulps—what delicious chocolate—he smelled it a second, and licked the spoon.

Out of doors he felt possessed of innumerable desires. He wished to embrace all women and to imbibe all Nature.

"And so ebbs the last day of my life," sighed M. Boule.

For M. Boule, become melancholy, was sighing. He looked at his watch, counted the time until noon; counted the time until afternoon—he gave himself only until afternoon to go to Blanche-Camille's and descend the stairway—then he looked at the street clock. His watch was four minutes fast. He noticed this detail and set it back to the correct time.

But time passes. Who has not noticed it? In three hours M. Boule was speaking to the concierge and his wife.

"Monsieur no longer feels his accident?" inquired these kind souls.

"Not at all. But——" with an effort:

"I am going to Madame Blanche-Camille's. At a quarter to three I will descend the stairway again."

"Take care, by all means," cried the concierge. "You will fall, that is certain. At least don't fall on your head. Lift your feet carefully and you won't get anything more than a scratch on the ankle."

"You forget what the doctor said," replied M. Boule dryly. "My proportions, my weight——"

The concierge interrupted him.

"A wordy fellow, that doctor! I repeat that it is sufficient if you are careful."

"I shall die," replied M. Boule. "Yes, I shall die; destiny demands it. Do you hear me?"

The concierge gave his wife a look that said plainly enough, "The poor man is a little off since his fall!" But not to aggravate M. Boule, he asked, "And what shall I do with your body?"

"Assisted by your wife, you will take it, with all the respect due to the dead, to Madame Blanche-Camille's."

"Will I be able to?"

"A recompense will be given you, you may count on it."

"Oh, that's not necessary, Monsieur. But, if I'm not mistaken, the law orders that anyone found dead away from home must be taken to the morgue."

He was not convinced, he was hoping rather, to bring M. Boule to his senses again.

"Good heavens!" M. Boule shuddered at the idea.

But he said with superb aplomb:

"You will say that you thought me injured, that is all, and that common sense required you to take me to Madame Blanche-Camille, who is a relative of mine."

"Certainly," said the concierge resignedly.

M. Boule went upstairs.

Blanche-Camille opened the door gayly. She also was worried about her sweetheart.

"Stop," said M. Boule. "I have to tell you something

very serious. You recall our conversation about a certain eventualitv?"

And he revealed his whole plan to her.

"Dear friend," murmured Blanche-Camille, "you still feel your fall on the head. You must take some tablets and perspire."

M. Boule protested that he was quite in his right mind. She knelt beside him then, and begged him with tears and exclamations to give up this plan.

"I forgot to tell you," said M. Boule, "that in my will I have made you my sole heiress."

Blanche-Camille blew her nose and was silent.

M. Boule, alone, began to descend the stairway. He did not hesitate. Instead, he rather played with the fateful steps.

As the landings were passed, as he was descending the last, he felt frozen with fear. He went on, however, always more slowly. He reached the step which preceded the fatal one.

He closed his eyes. To know the circumstances and manner of his death was sufficient for him. He did not wish to see it.

He set foot on the next to the last step.

The images of his childhood, of his youth, gleamed in seductive colors through the darkness to which poor M. Boule was condemned. A feeling of acute distress surged in his soul.

"Am I already there?" gasped M. Boule.

He listened, but did not hear the noise of his fall. He heard Blanche-Camille opening her door, prepared to receive the corpse which the concierges were to bring her. His foot poised on the step, M. Boule waited for death.

He waited several seconds. Then he moved one foot, then the other foot.

When M. Boule opened his eyes again he was standing up at the bottom of the stairs.

The concierge appeared.

"You have fixed the step," cried M. Boule.

"By no means," answered the concierge. "The claimants to the house are still quarrelling. But," he added admir-

ingly, "how skillful you are, Monsieur! You did not even stumble! You went so carefully!"

"Carefully!——" repeated M. Boule.

Then only did he discover that his instinct had saved him against his will.

"I myself have escaped my death," declared M. Boule.

The concierge was smiling; Blanche-Camille, who appeared above, was radiant with joy. Outside the hum of Paris filled the air. Everything seemed filled with the joy of living.

M. Boule did not frequent dance halls. But he did a jig-step to a tune whose lively spirit has been more than once admired.

THE IMMORTAL CURSE

By J. H. ROSNY AINE

(From *Revue Bleue*)

I

"WHAT a strange country this is," thought Frederick Maldar as he strode along the Marais des Escalaves in the fading twilight.

A livid mist rose from the water among the beds of seaweed. The old marsh had the same appearance as when the men of antiquity had christened it. One felt the presence of slimy, sticky, living objects, buried in the mud. An existence given up to battles between the devouring and the devoured. . . .

"In the age when Suffren led his victorious fleets against the masters of the sea, my great-great-grandmother was living here. There were six brothers, one of whom fought in America—— Why have we not come back for two generations? Am I about to renew a tradition?" he mused.

As Maldar walked along, he felt again the burden of a strange unrest which seemed to take possession of him every evening when darkness fell. This evening he was particularly troubled. Two or three times he thought he saw someone following him, and he looked backward fearfully, recalling that in this very locality a gang of outlaws had for six months been terrifying the country. The memory oppressed him. Aside from that there was no other country more lovely, more fitted for the wooing of the melancholy evening, which Maldar so mysteriously loved. But more awesome than this sense of someone following him were the sickly fears of his own mind. To escape these morbid notions he determinedly fixed his mind on other things, and, pushing aside the branches of a tree, he gazed, with apparent calm, upon the deserted site of an old forge, where according to ancient myth, the gods had hammered violet metals into iron mountains. It was truly an old forge

of the Cabires, dug up by a storm, which the darkness had engulfed in its devouring blackness.

He pondered over the old myths. A myth, was it? No more so than the swamp itself,—no more than Frederick Maldar. It lasted an hour, Maldar several decades, the swamp several thousand years,—and all three only a second in eternal time. The marsh had been there always, when the light was no more than phosphorus lost in a shadowy sea: Suddenly a threatening odor arose from the borders of the thick forest. Maldar fancied he heard Altair, Wega, Capella, chanting ancient litanies. From time to time, a flame of fire arose in the same illusory forms in which it had played, despite all changes in the world, in the time of the Chaldean shepherds, the prophets of Egypt and the Sophists of Greece.

A shiver passed over Maldar. With no possibility of mistake, in spite of the shadows, he had just sighted the outline of a man jutting up between two rocks, as if in wait for him. Watching intently Maldar saw a man of middling height who appeared to be crouching there. As he continued to walk, he saw the man change his position once—twice—three times.

Maldar felt for his revolver in the inside pocket of his trousers, all the time advancing toward the figure behind the rocks. As he came within five or six feet the mysterious form vanished. Mystified, Maldar pushed forward. Beyond the hollow he saw only the earth with scrubby bushes extending to the swamp, behind which the woods began again. When the hallucination had passed, so horrible that it had made his hair stand on end, Maldar still had a presentiment of danger.

All light had vanished except the flickering gleams of the stars in the black swamp. Twenty feet away the form of a willow could not be distinguished from the form of a man, yet Maldar was certain that the *other* stalked after him. After what seemed unbreaking darkness, a light at last pierced the night. Maldar had come to the bridge; beyond were three lighted windows. A dog barked joyfully; a servant appeared on the porch; a sense of relief overcame Maldar.

II

"The twilight was impressive," remarked Cecile Maldar, dipping her spoon into the soup. The brother and sister resembled each other in all but coloring; the man's hair was blond, and the woman's dark; but the eyes were the same, jade color, almond shape, with dark, dilating pupils.

"Yes," answered Maldar, "impressive—oh, very impressive!"

In the lighted room, near this girl of Gallic type, whom he had known since childhood and who recalled so many incidents of his everyday life, he forgot his terror, and the pleasant odor of the soup drove away his phantasies. Being a healthy person, he loved this dinner which reminded him of so many others, delicious, long drawn out and reposeful. He devoured greedily a well-seasoned, tender little pike.

"No danger in eating this river tiger," laughed Maldar.

"And the trout is a panther——"

"It's curious that carnivorous fish are good to eat,—while felines——"

The quince tart was delicious, with a cigarette and a small but very strong cup of coffee Maldar felt his happiness complete. He was one of those people who live for the moment, and since Cecile never troubled herself with the thought of hard times, they enjoyed life fully. . . .

After dinner, while Cecile busied herself with the details of housekeeping, Maldar sauntered to the library. Among the books there were old and new; he fingered one of the time of Franklin, and then selected two of the twentieth century. Choosing "The Travels of Captain Cook," and a novel called "Gaspard of the Mountains," he settled himself to read, but curiously found himself opening neither one nor the other.

The mood of the twilight was returning, a feeling of terror seized Maldar by the throat, and at the same time a sense of irritation. For a moment he seemed to struggle savagely with himself, loosening within an inexplicable hatred. Maldar detested Maldar!

This was not the first time he had felt himself the victim of his own inner conflicts, but he had never experienced the

struggle so intensely. He was amazed at the force of this inner battle.

But in a short time it was over. Maldar, looking around him, saw with pleasure the familiar room, secured against the outside world by iron bars across the windows.

In a calmer mood, he picked up "Gaspard of the Mountains" and was soon carried off to the Auvergne country. Occasionally he paused in his reading to visualize the characters, the places and the circumstances—then he resumed, with a little thrill of pleasure. . . . After an hour, however, he abandoned Gaspard, and, taking up the second book, began to follow Captain Cook in his amazing explorations.

It was not the first time: in his youth he had felt a loyal friendship for this adventurous rover. He had followed him far on his voyages. First on the good ship *Endeavor* across the Pacific to New Zealand and New Guinea, and back by way of the Indian Ocean: later on the *Revolution* and the *Adventure* again across the great Pacific to Tahiti, Australia, the Pacific Isles, the Hebrides . . . coming back through Antarctic waters, his brave spirit dreamed, no doubt, of turning toward the Pole.

Tonight Maldar and the sea-king sailed to the Sandwich Islands, Alaska, and the icy Arctic. But the end was approaching. Returning to the Sandwich Islands, the undaunted man who had faced death in a hundred different ways before, was murdered by the savage natives.

"Marvellous explorations!" mused Maldar. "What a contribution to knowledge! What an enormous task for the poor sailors who took their lives in their hands! And what virgin poetry surrounded them, if they had had imagination enough to appreciate it!"

Closing the book, he looked at Cecile, who was reading a history of witchcraft.

"It's unbelievable," she said, "how men have suffered through one another."

"They will always suffer, my dear! Think what frightful tortures millions and millions of men endured in the war! Burned alive with scalding oils . . . screaming with agony on the bare ground! And in the Orient torture isn't even yet absolutely abolished . . ."

"How horrid!" she cried, throwing down the book, "I'll console myself with Gerald d'Houville in the enchanted forest."

She buried herself in her romance, while Maldar, who had read enough, sat pondering over the mysteries of this room, where for three generations books, pictures and engravings had been accumulating. He strolled to the open window. Between the iron gratings he could see a meadow, like a glassy lake in the moonlight. A brook was babbling fainter than the sough of the willows on its bank. Maldar felt his unrest returning; it preyed upon him like a dark beast prowling in the forest.

"Why is there no peace in man?" he cried impatiently. "On such a night as this it is absurd to be feeling presentiments. My mind ought to be as perfectly contented as my body."

He began to walk. Walking was his cure for all ills. He went out of the library, through the dining-room, into the garden in the starlight.

The postern gate was open. He heard the low, consoling murmur of the brook; between the red birches, and the oaks with outstretched branches, he could see the orange half-moon descending. There was a fresh smell in the foliage, stirred by a gentle breeze. In the distance, a steep, jagged hill was outlined against the sky, presenting the same silhouette it had offered to watchers in the Middle Ages, or Gallic huntsmen riding through the night.

"How old it is—and how young!" he said, his gaze fixed on the intoxicating stars.

He strolled under the arching branches as far as the mossy footbridge, while a great violet cloud was rising in the west, and hiding the moon. The cloud was growing heavier, vaguely lighted by the stars, and Maldar, a little tired, stopped to rest. A rustling noise made him turn his head; he saw beside the brook, half hidden by the willows, a human silhouette.

Anguish seized him once more, and he cried out in a raucous voice: "Who's there?"

The shadow retreated and was half hidden by the willows.

Maldar saw, with horror—the same ghostly form!

Back in the house once more, with the door securely locked, in the lamplight and familiarity of home, he began to reflect. Fear lurked in him like a beast in the night. Was he in the presence of some strange reality, or was he prey to an hallucination? Both ideas were disagreeable, but he preferred the first. He had a great horror of nervous disorders.

After half an hour of conjecture he tried to take up "Gaspard of the Mountains," but his attention wandered and was lost. He soon abandoned the book and started to walk up and down again.

"What is the matter with you?" asked Cecile, disturbed by his gloomy looks.

He tried to smile.

"Nothing precisely—it's too absurd to even try to explain——"

Her first thought was of some bad news,—but the mail had arrived that morning, and had not seemed to worry Frederick, and he had no relations or intimate friends in this country.

"Don't you feel well?"

"Yes, perfectly. Don't worry, my dear. It's nothing—I tell you—an idea—nothing more."

Maldar's voice was hoarse and troubled. Cecile regarded her brother uneasily, but he seemed calmer, and he really was calm, except for a confused, half-conscious dread.

He picked up "Gaspard of the Mountains" again, wondering whether he had been influenced by the story, which was somewhat ghostly. But he had read thrilling stories a hundred times before without feeling nervous, much less having hallucinations. Besides out there by the swamp when the first *one* had appeared, his imagination had not been haunted by reading.

III

He expected to have difficulty in sleeping, but he dozed off the moment his head touched the pillow. He slept heavily, without dreams and without terror. About an hour before dawn he awoke suddenly.

He had left a large window open, as was his custom in

summer. Through the grilling he perceived the vague outline of a familiar tree, the bright embroidery of the stars on the violet velvet of night.

His heart was beating furiously, his whole body was shaking, he felt conscious of the presence of another human being. Rising up in bed he noticed confusedly the chairs, a table, the porcelain stove, the bureau and the glossy pallor of the mirrored wardrobe.

"Nothing!" he whispered to reassure himself.

His anguish persisted, and all at once he was positive that he saw on the threshold of his dressing-room the silhouette of a man. With a trembling hand he switched on the light. Nothing was there but the furniture. In the awful silence of the night he could hear the brook lapping and gurgling on the other side of the house.

For a moment only he hesitated. Then he picked up his revolver and got out of bed.

He had not been dreaming: the outer door of the dressing-room was open. He was sure he had double-locked it, as was his custom, on retiring. Then someone had entered. But where, and how? All the windows were secured with iron grillings, and the door had not been forced.

"Either it is someone who sneaked into the room before I went to sleep, or I am subject to hallucinations—and am sleep-walking in the bargain," Maldar told himself in a shaky voice.

He examined the windows, the bars were untouched. Both the dressing-room door, and that of the bedroom which led onto the stairway were closed.

"I'll look, just the same," thought Maldar.

He was shivering, his spine was frozen with fear; he had to make an enormous effort to get out to the landing, after he had turned on the electricity in the corridor.

Revolver in hand, he slowly descended, turning this way and that. Suddenly the electric light went out. Something grazed his shoulder. He felt a sharp thrust between his shoulders—he reeled, fell down the steps, and fainted. . . .

He remained there for some time. Cecile, whose sleep was deep and undisturbed, had heard nothing. When he regained consciousness it took him several minutes to recall

that he was lying on the floor. His memory was wavering; as it gradually became clearer, he remembered by degrees that he had been hit. Frightened and weak he got up and went groping for the nearest electric button. The light went on, and revealed only the hall, the entrance door, and the doors to the kitchen and dining-room.

"What does it mean? What does it mean?" Maldar was repeating to himself.

He felt only a slight pain in his back. He might have believed it was only imagination had he not seen a knife on the stairs. Putting his hand on his back he noticed that it was red with blood.

Evidently he had been hit from behind with this bloody knife. But his assailant had not returned to the attack. What did he want? Was he a thief, an enemy, or a fool?

Mechanically Maldar entered the dining-room where he turned on the light, then he went to the kitchen, then the library. He found the outer doors and the shutters all locked and bolted. It seemed probable, then, that the nightly visitor had either come in during the day and hidden himself, or had entered by a second-story window or the roof.

This ascertained, Maldar was astonished at his sangfroid. He felt curiously reassured, he was convinced that his wound was light, and that danger was no longer threatening him. In this state of mind he ascended the stairs. There was no trace of an intruder, neither on the second floor, nor in the huge attic, which had no means of communication with the out-of-doors except through two dormer windows solidly grilled, and secured by some ingenious steel apparatus.

"It is certain," he concluded, "that nobody has entered this house since it was locked."

To be doubly certain he gently tried to open the doors leading into Cecile's and the servants' rooms. They were locked. The women had bolted them as usual. Only one possibility was left. The thief, if he was a thief, had been in the house when the servants had closed it for the night.

"Then," it flashed upon him suddenly, "he must still be here!"

A cold, clammy terror rushed over him. He was on the point of calling Cecile. But first he examined his wound by the aid of a double mirror. It was not very deep, and seemed to be the result of a light, sure thrust. He felt so comforted that, after he had washed out his cut as well as he could, he was about to go back to bed. Still he decided that if the man were in the house, Cecile and even the servants ought to be warned. He made up his mind to wake her. . . .

His story alarmed and stunned her, but she did not lose her natural courage.

"We must go over the house once more, from top to bottom," she said.

To make more certain, she lighted the chandeliers. Frederick took up his Browning, and together they went downstairs. As Maldar had already determined, all the doors leading onto the street or the garden were doubly fastened with locks and bolts. The shutters also were closed, and had evidently admitted no one. On the stairway, except for the door into the corridor, everything was in order. Undoubtedly someone might have entered by the window which Maldar had left open for the night, except that its gratings were so close together that even a child of seven could scarcely have squeezed through them.

"It was no child that I saw—it was a man—almost my height——" said Maldar.

Cecile went to wake the servants. So as not to frighten them she spoke only of some suspicious noises. But the visit to their rooms threw no further light on the mystery. . . .

"If your back wasn't hurt, I should be inclined to think you were dreaming," said Cecile, when they were alone again.

"Perhaps then I was only sleep-walking," he replied.

Cecile examined his wound. It was a trifling cut between the shoulder blades and appeared to be a sidewise thrust.

"What ruins that last hypothesis," continued Maldar, "is the fact that in an attack of sleep-walking, I should have had to stab myself . . ."

He showed her the knife left by the aggressor.

They did not go back to bed until they had exhausted all possible solutions. . . .

In the morning they notified the doctor, the mayor and the police at Favigues, a town near the Maldars' estate. The police discovered nothing, and went away vaguely suspicious. The doctor, a wise old practitioner, examined the wound, looked at the knife, and concluded:

"A very feeble blow! Either from a coward or a child . . ."

He listened to all the details of the attack, which seemed to interest him tremendously, and finally said:

"This positively seems like an event from the other world, the world which in the nineteenth century was called the 'Beyond.' If you are not mistaken, if you have carefully verified all the facts, then only a ghost could have entered your house."

"Do you believe in ghosts, Doctor?"

"I don't know. When I said 'ghost' I used a poor word, —better say 'spirit'."

"You have made a study of the occult?"

"Yes, but a very slight one. The books on the science of the occult are so numerous and of such varied character! I have read only a few of the more celebrated volumes."

"I have always felt a repugnance for the supernatural, but it has fascinated me."

"We know nothing, nothing—or at best we know scarcely more than this fly here on my hand, who is evidently ignorant of the fact that he is at the mercy of a being as formidable to him as a giant the size of a mountain would be to us. It does not know, we do not know. The day when the workings of the 'Beyond' are clearly revealed to us, perhaps they will seem no more surprising than the workings of our bodies, where thousands of nerve centers coördinate the impressions of the external world. Personally I am practically certain that invisible beings are moving all around us. The universe seems more logical and coherent to me so, than if I believed that space was void of energy and life."

"We have no other proof than the proof of experience," contested Maldar.

"That is plain common sense. But in your case the interpretation of the experience seems to present several difficulties. However, with the police on one hand, and your own investigations on the other—— Would you mind if I tried several psychic tests?"

"Anything at all," said Maldar, smiling.

A minute afterward he was disgusted, for the doctor was already asking him a number of delicate, personal questions. Then he resumed.

"Just the same, it is unnatural. You have no enemies, and nothing here has been stolen. I would suspect a fit of hypnosis—but it is impossible that the cut between your shoulders and the manner in which it was inflicted should be your own work."

"Indeed, no!" exclaimed Maldar indignantly. "I have always been quite normal."

"Yes,—undoubtedly," acquiesced the doctor. But he was skeptical on this point, being inclined to believe that the human engine was very easily derailed. "However, even if you were not normal, I do not see how, in the present case, you could have interfered. That much is clear. We might then suppose that it was done by a madman. But in that case his appearance and disappearance present the same difficulties as if we suppose a criminal . . ."

The doctor thoughtfully studied his thumb-nail. He belonged to a hairy species of mankind. Two tufts, like hanks of wool, jutted out from his ears, his beard was extraordinarily plentiful, his hands covered with a reddish hair which probably grew heavily over his whole body. His yellow-green eyes glowed under his heavy eyebrows.

He took out his watch, saying:

"The wound is not at all serious; you do not need me—I will return at any rate if you will allow me—but not as a doctor."

As the doctor had predicted the wound healed rapidly, and Maldar spent several weeks in perfect peace. The judicial inquest, conducted by subordinates, had revealed nothing; the doctor clung to his first conclusion. . . .

Nevertheless some nervous disorder persisted in Maldar. Especially in the evening he had little fits of terror which

attacked him whenever he was alone in his bedroom. But habit is everything, and in about fifteen days he had practically recovered. The event remained a mystery, but gradually he became assured that it would never recur. Once more in a normal mood, he devoted himself to his studies, his books, and his ramblings. A great walker and an agile climber, he sought out lonely spots which gave him the sense of detachment one feels on top of a mountain.

Occasionally he reverted to his accident. "Was I dreaming? Is it possible that such an absurd and mystifying thing ever happened to me?"

If he was alone he shivered a little. However he asked himself the question less and less. One evening when he was glancing through the history of witchcraft again, he told himself, "In a little while I will have forgotten it."

He began to read, but he felt such unrest that he finally laid down the book. He was angry with himself, he almost hated himself.

"There are certainly moments when we seem to be our own enemies," he grumbled.

He was alone in the room. Cecile was giving orders to the cook. The windows were open, as they always were in summer. One could see the meadow and the garden, the beeches and the willows; one could hear the melody of the brook. The new moon was roving among the stars. By fits and starts the odor of new-mown hay was wafted in like perfume.

"It is good to be alive! It *must* be good to be alive!" Maldar told himself.

After he had spoken, his ill-ease seemed to vanish. He went over to one of the windows. Through the trees he could see a bit of the Milky Way, and he thought of the thrill it had given him at twenty. Night-flies were grazing his cheek, an animal with a long body like a snake went past—a weasel or an otter; a dog was baying at that immortal enemy whom dogs see at night, and other dogs took up the howl.

"To sleep, star-gazing under the sky,
Dreaming, to hear the friendly bells,
Their solemn hymns borne on the wind . . ."

quoted Frederick.

He picked up a thick book, "The Illustrious Dr. Maltheus." The evening passed quickly and pleasantly.

Nevertheless when he went to his room he took care to unhook an automatic pistol and a hunting-knife from the panoply on the wall. These he hid in the drawer of his night table, and went to sleep.

A bad dream awakened him. He felt his heart beating rapidly. A cold sweat covered his chest and neck. A vague fear haunted him. He looked expectantly toward the window where a flood of silver moonlight was streaming in. He heard a slight rustling, and turning, he saw, near the porcelain stove and facing the panoply—a pale form.

"Who's there?" he cried in a harsh, trembling voice.

His heartbeats were becoming unendurable. Although his hand shook like a leaf, he succeeded in opening the drawer of the night table, and seizing his automatic. At this moment the mysterious being—the same one, he was certain, as on the other occasion—stretched out its hand to draw a weapon. . . .

"Blackguard!" muttered Maldar.

For a second the two regarded each other. Then two shots went off simultaneously. One ball entered the wall above the wardrobe. The unknown visitor advanced a step, turned, fell, and rolled over on the floor. . . .

Maldar turned the switch,—there was no light. A terrific weakness overcame him and he thought he was going to faint; but he controlled himself, found a box of matches and a candle, which added but a slender flame to the moonlight. Maldar wondered if he had the courage to get up. He glanced toward the spot where the body ought to be, but it was hidden by the footboard of the bed.

Cautiously he stood up, the pistol in his right hand, the candle in his left. He went forward, but before he had passed the bed, he came upon the form. He started back, dropped the candle, uttered a sharp cry, and then stood as if paralysed.

The man stretched out there, clad only in his shirt, was, with the exception of a ghastly pallor, the exact image of Frederick!

A minute passed before Maldar dared to move. He

leaned on the bed in terror, his teeth clattering, his eyes wild and staring. For a long time he perceived nothing but the darkness, then the body appeared again, with its white, fantastic face, its dead hand, still clutching the revolver it had taken down from the panoply.

His terror and his fear slowly abated—and Maldar heard himself asking: "But where did it come from? Why did it attack me?"

He took two steps forward and stopped. He saw a small red gash in the man's forehead. So it was there that he had been hit.

This corpse was flatter, emptier, more mocking and more terrible than any body that Maldar had ever seen. The eyes were closed, the arms hanging from the long torso were stiffening, and the lips were parted feebly over transparent teeth. . . .

Just then someone knocked at the door.

Maldar unlocked it, and saw his sister, who had hastily slipped on a dressing-gown.

"What has happened?" she demanded, "I woke up with a start—I seem to have heard pistol shots——"

"It was I who fired them," said Maldar, quietly, "I—and he!"

"He—who?" she exclaimed, frightened.

"The—man who attacked me before."

Her eyes dilated with bewilderment and fear, but she went into the room and came suddenly upon the body. . . .

Her hands began to tremble, and she shook so violently that he put his arm about her to steady her. Then in a dreamy voice,

"You have killed him?" she asked.

"What could I do—he fired the first——"

"It is frightful!—And then—he looks like you——"

"Doesn't he," breathed Maldar. "And still the same mystery. How did he get in? Both doors were locked. It is impossible that he broke the grilling on the window. I was at his mercy—it was lucky that I woke up and saw him—He took this revolver from the panoply, the very same moment that I picked up my automatic—and so—he is dead!"

They stood a moment in silence, horror-stricken and tragic.

"It's nearly morning," said Cecile, finally; "we must notify the police."

As she turned she saw the cook and the chambermaid standing in the doorway. The former was already old, the other young, with an immense head, a bovine face, and huge, ungainly hands.

"We heard something," said the old woman, her beady eyes full of stupid but stubborn curiosity, "so we came."

When they saw the body they shrieked horribly, fear mingled with the joy of being in a scandal. When they calmed down and their surprise diminished they remembered the first drama over which they had gossiped with their neighbors and the tradesmen.

"The same man," whispered the old woman. "Shall we call Legouvent and his son—it is almost time for them to be up?"

Maldar nodded. A quarter of an hour later, the father Legouvent, the son, the grandmother, and two daughters came running to view the corpse.

The son promised to go to the mayor, the younger daughter to the police.

"We ought to send for the doctor," said Cecile.

Frederick and Cecile closed the door of the unhappy room, and waited anxiously, sadly, in the misty dawn. Joy was in the air, the grass was stirring, fluttering wings presaged happiness.

The doctor arrived first; his eyes set, his face half-buried in his beard.

"The same occurrence?" he cried. He looked narrowly at Cecile and Frederick standing there bewildered, nervous and pale.

"The same, only worse!" sighed Maldar, "I have killed him!"

"Killed him, the devil!" said the doctor, interested at once. "Self-defence, I presume?"

"I had no alternative but to kill or be killed," answered Maldar.

The doctor was curious.

"Do you understand it better?"

"Not in the least—I was surprised as I was the other time—He was there in my room, inexplicably—both doors locked and bolted . . ."

"We'll find out just the same—with the assistance of these gentlemen——"

He turned, ironically, to two newcomers, two policemen, half-awake and very sulky.

One of them, a lieutenant, grumbled:

"I guess we came here for something——"

"Do you want to see it?"

They followed Maldar, the doctor came after. The lieutenant made a pretence of examining the room, then bent down over the body.

"This is peculiar. How did it happen?"

To the doctor more than to the policemen, Maldar told the story.

"He could not have come through the doors, or the windows," agreed the lieutenant, who was searching the bureau drawers, one by one. "Perhaps, you made a mistake—and forgot to lock something."

"I don't believe so."

"It isn't a ghost," jeered the other feebly, "because there it is!"

"Perhaps it is a ghost, all the same," said the doctor. . . .

He approached the body and put out his hand to touch it.

"Don't disturb it," yelled the lieutenant.

"Don't be alarmed, lieutenant, as he lies there—he will remain—but look——"

He seized the arm of the dead man, lifted it, uttered a cry, and let it fall. . . .

Then he turned away, pale.

"It is not a man," he said.

The policemen would have met this statement with derision coming from anyone but the doctor. But they knew the old man, through many an accident and many a crime.

"Then what is it?" inquired the lieutenant.

"I don't know—not yet—I have no right to make any assumptions—But wait, we'll make a test. Lieutenant, lift

the head a little. You will see that the body has almost no weight . . ."

The other policeman watched with his eyes popping out, while a look of astonishment came over Maldar's face.

"Look here, doctor—you ain't kidding us?"

"Try it. Try it," the doctor commanded.

It had been a long while since a corpse had frightened the lieutenant any more than it might frighten an interne at the hospital. He had seen so many.

Nevertheless, he approached this one with a shudder which became violent when he had lifted the head and let it fall. . . .

"Peculiar," he muttered. "Astonishing! I notice also—Compare its face with that of Mr.——"

A shudder passed over the crowd.

The room was closed; one of the policemen stood in front of the house, while the mayor, the doctor and Maldar gathered in the library.

The mayor, a red-haired man who looked positively prehistoric, declared:

"The 'Beyond' exists!"

"What do you mean?" asked the doctor. "Evidently there are many things in this world which we cannot understand —and many more which we do not even see—but, granted that, what is the 'Beyond'?"

"Simply the other world," answered the mayor. "This being cannot be a man, it is another kind of living thing—which men call a specter or a ghost——"

"That is exactly what we do not know," answered the doctor. "This being may perhaps belong to our world."

"You mean that the 'Beyond' is here?"

"I think it should be, in any case—but if I dare express my entire opinion, it is neither from an earthly 'Beyond' or a heavenly 'Beyond,' from which this spirit comes——"

"Then where does it come from?"

The doctor did not answer. He was looking straight before him. For a minute he seemed hypnotized. Then he said in a low voice:

"There are many ways of conceiving the occult world,—unquestionably this world is many-sided. I neither deny

nor affirm what you call the 'Beyond,' but I am almost certain that the being upstairs comes from *here*—from very near-by."

"I don't understand——"

"You noticed its strange resemblance to Mr. Maldar?"

Maldar was trembling violently. He was pale and very tired, and he felt a sense of great loss and a strange grief within him.

"Everybody noticed it," said the mayor.

"Very well," continued the doctor, in a lower voice than before, as if frightened by his own words, "the being up there is an emanation of our host. It is his double. The struggle during the night was the struggle of a man with himself. And the man did not die——"

The three men looked at each other. To all three the proof seemed apparent.

"It is unbelievable," murmured the mayor at last.

"Isn't everything that happens unbelievable?"

"I begin to understand," said Maldar in the voice of a dreamer, "this great dissatisfaction I felt with myself, which became hateful to me at times—that was my struggle—with him."

"But aren't doubles immortal?" sighed the mayor.

"Haven't we proof there to the contrary?" answered the doctor. "I believe now that these manifestations of our double are also endowed with life and personality. Nearly always this personality is confused with ours, but we have just proved that it can be separate, so much so as to become a violent enemy. I wonder if many deeds which are done against our evident self-interest cannot be attributed to this, —even certain suicides."

Maldar recalled those nights when he had despised himself so utterly, when it seemed that one part of him was so ferociously opposed to the other. He felt a deep regret, as if he had lost some one very dear to him.

"Shall I be able to live without him?" he groaned, "or at any rate won't I notice his loss?"

"I have a feeling," the doctor answered quietly, "that another double will be born in you to take the place of this one who is dead."

THE BELLS OF MARRAKECH

By JEROME and JEAN THARAUD

(From *Les Contemporains*)

A FRANCISCAN Father said the Mass every Sunday for the few nuns, officials and a dozen or so Roman Catholic merchants who lived in Marrakech. The way to the chapel was not easy to find.

To get there from my house, you had to cross the Djema-el-Fna, the strange, vast square where all the weird magics and superstitions of the South seemed to have their meeting place amid a deafening noise of tom-toms and bagpipes: snake charmers, fire eaters, negresses that foretell the future from shells, doctors that cure all ills by spitting in your mouth or slipping a cobra between your shirt and your skin, equivocal boy dancers with painted eyes, ballad singers, clowns and acrobats from the Souss country and all manner of other quaint folk besides.

A strange approach, truly, to the hearing of the Mass, this place alive with incantations, malefices, poisons, barbarous fancies, where religion and lust mingle, where at any moment you may hear, rising from the crowd round a showman or a sorcerer, the prayer of Islam, the affirmation of the One God, the *fata* of Mohammed, which all these people in *burnus* listen to solemnly, hands extended in ritual posture, repeating: "Amen . . . amen . . ."

Then the way led through a street choked with camels carrying enormous burdens, and little donkeys buried under mountains of vegetables and fruit. At the back of tiny shops, mere openings in the *mutti* walls, and looking like posters on a dyke, merchants squatted amid their wares, bargaining, passing pleasantries with the buyers or muttering a prayer while counting their beads. In the courtyard of a mosque, you could see through the open door men sleeping on strips of carpet, some making their ablutions around a broken basin, others, immovable as statues,

drinking in the delicious peace of the shady and religious refuge. Finally you turned down a passage so narrow that one single donkey with its load could have made it impassable, one of these vennels that abound infinitely in the city, where, awaiting the master, the mule and the attendant servant sleep as if of the sleep that knows no awakening.

It was in this street that stood the chapel.

There was nothing from the outside to distinguish it from the other houses. You entered through the narrow lobby usual in Arab dwellings and at the end of which is the central courtyard of the house. Over this, a roof had been built.

Everything in the court had remained just as it had been in the humble days of its Mohammedan ownership: pillars of whitewashed bricks, beams of cedar wood, earthenware tiles and moulded stucco. A perfect Moorish setting, in the midst of which a Christian altar had been built, a *Via Crucis* set up, and all the decorations assembled that make the pride of our village churches: vases, chandeliers, posies, paper flowers and the rest. For all the world like a European peasant woman you came on unexpectedly in this secret place, in an Islamic atmosphere; a charming, incongruous surprise. To be quite like her sisters of Brittany, Burgundy or Brie, the chapel only lacked one thing, though truly this was an essential thing: a voice, a bell on its roof.

This lack preyed all the more on the mind of the good Franciscan Father who had recently been appointed to the parish, since his predecessor, in building the roof over the *patio,* had gone to the trouble of raising on it a light wooden campanile.

Filled with fine apostolic zeal, the Father made short work of collecting a nice little sum, and, a few days before Easter, a camel that filled the entire vennel, brought, balanced perilously on its hump, the Queen of Saba, the bronze guest the campanile had been waiting for.

Our good Franciscan betook himself without delay to the General commanding the district, to invite him to attend the christening, which had been fixed for Easter Sunday. He was greatly mortified when, hardly had he uttered a few

words, the General jumped out of the garden chair in which he was smoking his cigarette:

"A bell! But, Father! You actually want to ring a church bell in the very heart of Marrakech, a stone's throw away from the mosque? Are you mad? Do you want to create a riot, to stir up revolution in the entire city? And to what end? I ask you. . . . Just for the pleasure of having a peal which most of your parishioners will never hear, but which will offend the feelings of the whole population! I absolutely forbid it! Your plan is perfect lunacy. Drop that bell of yours, and don't let us hear another word about it."

The unfortunate Franciscan listened dumfounded to this unexpected tirade. True, the General was not an assiduous worshipper, but he did attend Mass from time to time. On all occasions, priests and nuns had found him full of welcoming good will and it was he himself who had authorised the mission to establish itself in this quarter of the town. And now . . . ! He was prepared to allow Mass to be said behind closed doors, but he would not hear of the Christian Church manifesting its presence loudly and openly in this Islamic city. "What strange weakness," thought the Father, "what wretched subservience to public opinion! Here are we in this country making every effort to advertise our strength by drums and bugles and every possible display of military pomp, and we positively tremble when it is a question of confessing publicly the faith that is in us! What a miserable, illogical attitude! What a superficial reading of the native psychology! Why, one of the main reasons why the Arab is so aloof from us, is precisely that he has a strongly developed religious sense, and he can see every day that we have not. When do the Arabs see us praying? By what external signs can they see that we also have a God? Our Church hides herself. Our few worshippers only come to chapel once a week. And the men of Islam hear continually, throughout the whole day, the appeal to prayer being launched from the minarets; whereas we are not allowed, one single time a day, to send up to heaven a few peals that would announce that neither are we worshippers of idols and false gods!"

So reflected the missionary of Marrakech what time he was passing, dreamily, like a blind man, through the native crowd, brutal yet supple, that filled the street; paying no attention to this manner of life that reckons its age in thousands of years, over which centuries glide without altering one iota to either actions or thoughts.

He stopped in front of a nail-studded door and lifted the knocker. A little girl opened for him and the Father entered the *patio* with the easy assurance of a familiar visitor. He found himself in the presence of an old nun who, with some more, taught sewing and a few words of French to the little Arab girls of the town.

"My Sister," said he, after a rapid greeting, "we will have a sad Easter day. Our bell is not to be baptised." And he related the scene he had had at the General's, adding to the story some of the bitter thoughts that had occurred to him on the way.

The old nun, who had long lived in Marrakech, replied: "Father, shall I confess to you that I had half foreseen what has happened? I did not mention a word of it to you because I hesitated to discourage your zeal, and also I feared you might think I was a woman of lukewarm faith. Yet, let me tell you now quite frankly; I think the General is right. See the work we are doing here." So saying, she pointed to about fifty little girls assiduously bent over their work. "All these children come to us willingly, and their parents have no scruples in confiding them to our care because they know that it is our rule never to utter one word about religion. We simply endeavour to give them a good example, some idea of cleanliness and a taste for work, a thing they sadly lack. For the rest we leave to God the task of bringing light to their souls. Many a time I feel sorely tempted to do more, but I put a bridle on my tongue. Do as I do, Father, and let us make of our bell a sacrifice unto God."

These wise words did not wholly convince the Father and it was a long time that night before he could find sleep, for he was sorely beset with thoughts, some of resignation, some of revolt.

At last he had glided into a deep sleep when he sud-

denly heard the sound of music descending from heaven.

At first it was very dim and distant; as a symphony of brass instruments the vibrations of which filled to the brim with their intoxicating tumult the slumbers of the priest. Doubtless he was dreaming. This very thought, however, woke him up. But, contrary to what usually occurs in dreams, the more he came back to wakefulness, the sharper became the dream, the louder sounded this nocturnal concert, the more the room seemed to fill with this marvellous noise.

The whole night resembled a tuneful drapery, the folds of which were being shaken by the breeze. Not a corner of silence and shade where this music did not penetrate; a harmony made of crystalline embroideries on a sober background. Lying in the darkness of his bedroom, still heavy with sleep, the Franciscan Father wondered whether he were not dreaming yet, whether this aerial music, these voices calling to and answering each other in the sky, all these sounds of brass and silver instruments, this swift canter of tones flying in long strides through the night, were not, as he had dreamed it but a few moments before, the flight of the bells coming back from Rome, crossing the world in company, to each stop in turn in its own familiar steeple.

But alas! These were no bells at all. They were the voices of a hundred *muezzins* who, on the approach of dawn, pour their chants over Marrakech just when the night is at its darkest, when the moon has left the sky and the sun is still a long way off, hidden behind the summits of the Atlas range. A fine farewell to moonlight, and an appeal to the sunlight to hasten and drive away the demons of the night. . . . You may have heard it scores of times and think you have become used to it, yet you will always be surprised by this wonderful religious invocation that bursts out suddenly like a blast of bugles in the very heart of the night.

The priest might well make his mistake, for the voices of the *muezzins* bear a strange likeness to the voice of the bells. Some resemble funereal peals, full of a savage sadness and inexhaustible regrets, others, joyous and fresh, seem to leap forward to meet life's brightest hopes.

He who has not been thus surprised and awakened in old Marrakech, in some Arab dwelling-place, by this magic concert, can have no idea of the strangeness of it all; how one is surrounded and assaulted in the midst of sleep by these hundred voices ringing out at the same moment in the vast silence of the night, hustling each other, yet harmonising, uniting and crossing like an immense net of sound that falls down from heaven to gather and lift up in one cast a whole harvest of souls. Then, almost in unison, the voices die out; but as round a bell that has ceased to strike there hovers for a while a veil of diffused sound, so for a few moments long, dim waves of music linger and slowly glide away to die in the deep peace of the night.

Silence reigned once more over old Marrakech.

Quite awake now, and more deeply moved than he had imagined by this peal of human bells that had sung of thoughts vastly removed from his own, the Franciscan Father could no longer hold in his sorrow. In the darkness of his bedchamber now once more deep in silence, he wept over his bell that was lost—which may have been a very natural thing to do, but was altogether unreasonable.

THE YEARBOOK OF THE FRENCH SHORT STORY
JULY, 1923 TO JULY, 1924

ADDRESSES OF MAGAZINES PUBLISHING SHORT STORIES

NOTE. *This address list does not aim to be complete, but it is based simply on the magazines which I have consulted for this volume, and which have not ceased publication.*

AF. L. Afrique Latine, Paris.
AN. Les Annales, rue Saint Georges, Paris.
B. L. Belles Lettres, 89, Boulevard Exelmans, Paris.
C. Candide, 18, rue du Saint-Gothard, Paris.
CON. Contemporains, 7, rue du Vieux Colombier, Paris.
C. I. Conteurs Inédits, Editions Kemplen, rue de Miromesnil, Paris.
CO. Correspondant, 31, rue Saint Guillaume, Paris.
G. R. La Grande Revue, 37, rue de Constantinople, Paris.
IL. L'Illustration, 13, rue Saint Georges, Paris.
L. L. Les Lettres, 14, rue de l'Abbaye, Paris.
L. P.T. Lecture Pour Tous, 79, Boulevard Saint Germain, Paris.
M. Les Marges, 110, Boulevard Saint Germain, Paris.
M. F. Mercure de France, 26, rue de Condé, Paris.
N. L. Nouvelles Littéraires, 6, rue de Milan, Paris.
N. R. C. Nouvelle Revue Critique, 16, rue José-Maria-de-Hérédia, Paris.
N. R. F. Nouvelle Revue Française, 3, rue de Grenelle, Paris.
R.B. Revue Bleue, 286, Boulevard Saint Germain, Paris.
R. CR. Revue Critique, 27, rue Saint Sulpice, Paris.
R. 2M. Revue des Deux Mondes, 15, rue de l'Université, Paris.
R. F. Revue de France, 1, Avenue de l'Observatoire, Paris.
R. H. Revue Hebdomadaire, 8, rue Garancière.
R. M. Revue Mondiale, 45, rue Jacob, Paris.
R. P. Revue de Paris, 3, rue Auber, Paris.
T. R. La Table Ronde.

THE BIOGRAPHICAL ROLL OF HONOR OF FRENCH SHORT STORIES

JULY, 1923, TO JULY, 1924

NOTE. *Only stories by French authors are listed.*

ADAM, PAUL. Vers Dieu, pages inédites. B. L. 1. 24.

ARNOUX, ALEXANDRE, author: Au Grand Vent; Abisag, ou l'Eglise transportée par la foi; Le Cabaret; La Nuit de St. Barnabé; Sextuor.

BAILLY, AUGUSTE, author: Le Champ des Carottes; Les Divins Jongleurs; Les Prédestinés et les Chaînes du Passé; La Troupe sans rivale; Les Chînes du Passé; La légende du blé; Le Chévalier Blanc; Le gros Lot; Le Ménétrier de Less'lach; L'Amour tue et sauve; La Carcasse; Le Pédicure Chinois; Trois Nuptiales; Eros, Invincible Eros.

BARRIERE, MARCEL. Born at Limoux, November 3, 1860. Author: L'Œuvre d'Honoré de Balzac; Le Nouveau Don Juan; L'Education d'un Contemporain; Le Roman de l'Ambition; Les Ruines de l'Amour; La Dernière Epopée; Le Monde Noir; L'Art des passions; La Nouvelle Europe; Saint Ange d'A———, histoire d'amour éllégiaque; Les Précurseurs; Un Homme de demain; Vers la guerre; L'Ere sanglante; La Fédération Latine; La Quatrième République; Le Monde Futur; Le Mauvais Eros.

BAZIN, RENE, de l'Académie Française. Born at Angers, December 26, 1853. Legion of Honor. Author: Une tache d'encre; Les Noellet;A l'aventure; Ma Tante Giron; La Sarcelle Bleue; Sicile; Madame Corentine; Les Italiens d'aujourd'hui; Humble amour; Terre d'Espagne; En Province; De toute son âme; Contes de Bonne Perrette; La Terre qui meurt; Croquis de France et d'Orient; Les Oberlé; Le Guide de l'Empereur; Donatienne; Pages Choisies; Récits de la Plaine et de la Montagne; L'Isolée; Stéphanette; L'Enseigne de vaisseau Paul Henry; Le Duc de Nemours; Le Blé qui lève; Notes d'un amateur de couleurs; La Campagne Birot; Nord-Sud; Mémoires d'une vieille fille; Gingolph l'abandonné; La Closerie de Champdolent; Récits du temps de la Guerre; Les Nouveaux Oberlé; Il était quatre enfants; Conte de Triolet.

BEAUNIER, ANDRE. Born at Evreux, September 22, 1869. Author: Les Dupont-Le-Terrier; Notes sur la Russie; Bonhommes de Paris; La Poèsie Nouvelle; Les Trois Legrand; Picrate et Siméon; Le Roi Tobol; L'Art de regarder les Tableaux; Les Idees et les Hommes; Trois amies de Châtaubriant; L'Homme qui a perdu son moi; La Fille de

Polichinelle; Le Sourire d'Athéna; Les Souvenirs d'un Peintre; Figures d'autrefois; Sentiments de la guerre; La Jeunesse de Joseph Joubert; Les plus détestables bonhommes; Visages de femmes; Les Surboches. Le Roi Tobol; Le Dernier Jour; L'Assassinée; Irène Exigeante.

Bec, Lucien. Sauveur II. G. R. 6. 23.

Beraud, Henri. Le Sergent Lèbre. D. 6. 24; Lazare. R. F. 19. 1. 24.

Bernard, Tristan. Born at Besançon, September 7, 1866. Author: Contes de Pantruche et d'ailleurs; Sous toutes réserves; Mémoire d'un Jeune Homme rangé; Un mari pacifique; Amants et voleurs; Le Crime d'Orléans; L'Affaire Larcier; Deux amateurs de femmes; M. Codomat; Le Costaud des Epinettes; Les Deux Canards; Citoyens, Animaux, Phénomènes; Les Veillées du Chauffeur; Auteurs, Acteurs, Spectateurs; Le Roman d'un mois d'Eté; Sur les grands chemins; Nicolas Bergère; Mathilde et ses mitaines (avec Schlumberger); On naît esclave; Les Visiteurs Nocturnes; Les Juneaux de Brighton; Le Petit Café; L'Accord Parfait; Jeanne Doré; Du vin dans son eau ou l'impôt sur le revenu; La Carte d'Amour; Souvenirs épars d'un ancien cavalier; L'Enfant Prodigue du Vésinet; Corinne et Corentin; Le sceau du secret; La Vache.

Binet-Valmer, Gustave. Born at Geneva, Switzerland, June 5, 1875. Author: Les Métèques; Le Gamin tendre; Lucien; Le Sphinx de Platre; Le Plaisir; Notre pauvre amour; Le Cœur en désordre; La Passion; L'Enfant qui meurt; Le Désir et le Péché; Le Désordre; Les Jours sans Gloire; La Seconde Epouse; Cette Haine.

Bonnard, Abel, author: Les Familiers; Les Royautés; La Vie et l'Amour; L'Adieu; La France et ses Morts.

Bordeaux, Henri, de l'Académie Française. Born at Thonon-les-Bains, January 29, 1870. Author: Ames modernes; Sentiments et idées de ce temps; Le Pays natal; Le Voie sans retour; La Peur de Vivre; L'Amour en fuite; Une Honnête femme; Le Pain Blanc; Le Lac noir; Vies Intimes; La Petite Mademoiselle; Les Roquevillard; Paysages romanesques; L'Ecran Brisé; La Robe de Laine; Le fort de Vaux; Le Carnet d'un Stagiaire; La Neige sur les pas; La Maison; Amette et Philibert; La Nouvelle Croisade des enfants; La Jeunesse Nouvelle; Les Derniers Jours du Fort de Vaux; La Chanson de Vaux-Douaumont; Les Pierres du Foyer; La résurrection de la Chair; Marie Louise ou les deux sœurs; Un Coin de France pendant la guerre; Le Plessis de Roye; Une doctrine de vie; La Vie recommence; Les Deux Faces de la Vie; Au pays des Amours de Lamartine; Voici l'Heure des Ames; Ménage d'après guerre; Le Curé de Lanslevillard; Les Amants d'Annecy; La Vie est un Sport; Sport; L'Enfant aux deux mères; Amours du temps passé; La Jeune Fille aux Oiseaux.

Boulenger, Marcel. Born at Paris, September 9, 1873. Author: La Femme Baroque; Le Page; La Croix de Malte; Couplées; Quarante Escrimeurs; Les quatres maladies du style; Au Pays de Sylvie; Les

Souvenirs du marquis de Floranges; L'Amazone Blessée; Les Doigts de Fée; Le Cœur au loin; Sur un tambour; La Cour; Écrit le Soir; Les Quatre Saisons; Amour romantique; Marguerite; Le Pavé du Roi; L'Enfant Prodigue.

Bourget, Paul, de l'Académie Française. Born at Amiens, September 2, 1853. Author: L'Irréparable; Deuxième Amour; Profils Perdus; André Cornélis; Recommencements; Voyageuses; Complications sentimentales; La Duchesse Bleue; Le Luxe des Autres; Le Geste du Fils, etc.

Boutet, Frederic, author: La Lanterne Rouge; Celles qui les attendent; Lucie, Jean et Jo; Morgam passa; Totote et Cie.; Les Malheurs d'Auguste; Quart de Livre et la Fille de Mme. Tranchart; Un Beau Mariage; Les Saphirs; Le Réalisateur; Paradis Perdu.

Carco, Francis. Born at Noumea, New Caledonia, July 3, 1886. Author: Verotchka l'Etrangère; Panam; Le Couteau.

Cherau, Gaston. Born at Niort, November 6, 1872. Author: Les grandes époques de M. Thébault; La Saison balnéaire de M. Thébault; Monseigneur voyage; Champi-tortu; La Prison de Verre; L'Oiseau de Prois; Le Monstre; Le Remous; Valentine Pacquault.

Christian-Froge, R. Born at Vernoil le Fourrier, April 17, 1880. Author: Les Captifs, Les Diables Noirs.

Colette, author: La Paix chez les Bêtes; Dans La Foule; Mitsou, ou comment l'esprit vient aux filles; Chéri; Les Heures Longues; La Maison de Claudine; L'Envers du Music-Hall; L'Entrave, suite à la Vagabonde; Le Voyage Egoïste; La Chambre Eclairée; Sept Dialogues de Bêtes; La Retraite Sentimentale; Claudine en ménage (in coöperation with Willy); La Vagabonde; L'Ingénue Libertine; Claudine à l'école (in coöperation with Willy); Claudine s'en va; Claudine à Paris. Les Vrilles de la Vigne.

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Croidiys, Pierre de. Laisse entrer le Soleil. R. M. I. 9. 23.

Dekobra, Maurice. Born at Paris, May 26, 1885. Author: Les Mémoires de Rat de Cave; Histoire de Brigands; Levoyage sentimental de Lord Littlebird; Les Liaisons tranquilles; Messieurs Les Tommies; Sammy, Volontaire Américain; Grain de Cachou; L'Etonnante Vie du Colonel Jack; Le Gentleman Burlesque; Prince ou Pître; Hamydal le Philosophe; Minuit Place Pigalle; Le Rire dans le brouillard; La Fillete aux oranges; Une Momie a été perdu.

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Delarue-Mardrus, Lucie. Born at Honfleur, November 3, 1880. Author: La Figure de Proue; Comme Tout le Monde; La Monnaie de Singe; L'Inexpérimentée; Douce Moitié; Un Cancre; Deux Amants; Souffle de Tempête; Toutoune et son Amour; A maman; L'Apparition; Le Pain Blanc; Lucie, Amélie et les Désséchés.

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Drieu la Rochelle, P. La Valise Vide.

Duhamel, Georges, author: Le Miracle; Lapointe et Ropiteau; Elévation et mort d'Armand Branche; Entretiens dans le Tumulte; Paul Claudel; Confession de Minuit; La Lumière; Les Hommes Abandonnés; Civilisation.

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Duvernois, Henri, author: Le Veau Gras; Fifinoiseau; Le Mari de la Couturière; Nounette ou la Déesse aux cent bouches; Popote; La Maladresse; La Maison des confidences; Marchandes d'Oublis; Le Roseau de Fer-Edgar; Les Demoiselles de Perdition; Nane ou le lit conjugal; Crapotte; Edgar; La Brebis galeuse; Le Revenant; Servante; Toto; La Leçon Inutile.

Farrere, Claude. Born at Lyons, April 27, 1876. Author: Fumées d'opium; Les Civilisés; L'Homme qui Assassina; Mlle. Dax, jeune fille; Les Petites Alliées; La Bataille; Les Temporeras; Dix-sept histoires de marins; Quatorze histoires de soldats; Les Maisons des Hommes Vivants; Bêtes et gens qui s'aimèrent; La Dernière Déesse; La Vieille Histoire; Les Condamnés à Mort; Roxelane; Croquis d'Extrême Orient; Damoclès; L'An 1937.

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Geraldy, Paul, author: Les Petites Ames; Toi et Moi; La Guerre, Madame; Les Noces d'Argent; Aimer; Les Grands Garçons; Le Prélude.

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Guitet-Vauquelin, Pierre. Born at Montauban, June 10, 1882. Author: L'Ame Nouvelle; Le Monopole Universitaire; La Revue Rose Toulousaine; Le Triomphe de la Chair; Mendiandou; Les Immobiles; Le Marchand d'Illusions; Le Sang des Vignes; La Force du Doute; Le Phorminx; L'Amour en Détresse; La Torpille; L'Ame de Paris; La Culture de Citrus; L'Amour Exige; La Passion Aragonaise.

HENRIOT, PHILIPPE. La Lettre Egarée. L. L. 10. 4. 24.

HIRSCH, CHARLES-HENRI. Born at Paris, April 18, 1870. Author: LaVierge aux Tulipes; Eva Tumarches et ses amis; La Demoiselle de Comédie; Pantins et Ficelles; Le Tigre et Coquelicot; Les Disparates; Des hommes, des femmes et des bêtes; Dame Fortune; Le Sang de Paris; Racaille et Parias; Les Châteaux de Sable; L'Amour en herbe; Le Crime de Potru, soldat; La Grande Capricieuse; La Chêvre aux pieds d'or; Zulaïna; L'Enchaînement; Nicolas Florinette; Le Silencieux.

HUET, MAURICE, author: La Cent Onzième Olympiade; A Quatre Pattes; Publicité.

JALOUX, EDMOND. Born at Marseilles, June 19, 1878. Author: L'Agonie de l'Amour; Les Sangsues; Le Jeune Homme au Masque; L'Ecole des Mariages; Le Démon de la Vie; Le Reste est Silence; Le Boudoir de Proserpine; L'Eventail de crêpe; L'Incertaine; Fumées dans la campagne; Au-dessus de la Ville; Les Femmes et la Vie; Les Amours Perdues; La Fin d'un beau jour; L'Escalier d'Or; La Fugitive.

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LACRETELLE, JACQUES DE, author: Silberman; Une Belle Journée.

LAPAIRE, HUGHES. La Treille en Fleur. IL. 29. 9. 23.

LARBAUD, VALERY, author: A. O. Barnabooth; Fermina Màrquez; Enfantines; Introduction aux Pages Choisies de Walt Whitman; Beauté, mon beau souci; Amants, heureux amants; Mon Plus Secret Conseil.

LARGUIER, LEO. Born in La Grand-Combe, December 6, 1878. Author: La Maison du Poète; Les Isolements; Jacques; L'Après-midi chez l'antiquaire.

LAVEDAN, HENRI, de l'Académie Française. Born in Orléans, April 9, 1859. Author: Mam'zelle Vertu; Reine Janvier; Lydie; Inconsolables; Sire; Petites Fêtes; La Haute; Une Famille; Nocturnes; Le Nouveau Jeu; La Critique du Prince d'Aurec; Leur Cœur; Une Cour; Leur beau physique; Le Lit; Le Prince d'Aurec; Leurs sœurs; Les Marionnettes; Le Vieux Marcheur; La Valse; Les Départs; Les Deux Noblesses; Les Beaux Dimanches; Le Carnet d'un petit châtelain; Le Marquis de Priola; C'est servi! Viveurs; Varennes (in coöperation with G. Lenôtre); Baignoire 9; Le Duel; Le Bon Temps; En Visite; Bon an, mal an; La Vie courante; Les Grandes Heures; La Famille française; La Chienne du Roi; Servir; La Valse-Pétard; Les Sacrifices (in coöperation with Michel Zamacoïs); Lydie; Panteau; Belle Histoire de Geneviève; L'Ane de Sainte Austreberte.

LECHARTIER, GEORGES. Born in Paris, July 19, 1868. Author: L'Irréductible force; Où va la Vie; David Hume moraliste et sociologue; Le Vaisseau de Plomb; La Confession d'une Femme du monde (prix Montyon, de l'Académie Française); Intrigues et Diplomatie à Washington (prix Montyon, de l'Académie Française).

LENORMAND, H.-R., author: Poussière; L'Esprit Souterrain; Terres Chaudes; Trois Drames; Le Penseur et le Crétin; Fidélité.

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LICHTENBERGER, ANDRE, author: Mon Petit Trott (Académie Française-Prix Montyon); La Petite Sœur de Trott (Académie Française-Prix Montyon); La Petite; Biche; Le Cœur est le même; Le Sang Nouveau; Les Contes de Minnie; Petite Madame; Juste Lobel, Alsacien; Le Petit Roi; L'Automne; Notre Minnie; Line; Portraits d'aïeules; Portraits de jeunes filles; La Mort de Corinthe (couronné par l'Académie Française-Prix Montyon); Scènes en Famille; Chez les Graffougnat; Les Centaures; Poupette, fille d'Allah; Gorri le Forban; Kaligouça le cœur fidèle; Raraméné, histoire d'ailleurs; Père; Rédemption; La Gifle; Monsieur de Migurac ou le Marquis Philosophe; La Folle Aventure; Les Roses de France; La Petite Chaperon vert et autres contes; Tous Héros; Un Pauvre Homme.

MACORLAN, PIERRE. Born in Péronne. Author: La Maison du Retour Ecœurant; Les Pattes en l'Air; Les contes de la Pipe en Terre; Le Rire Jaune; Les Poissons Morts; L'U 713 ou les Gentilhommes d'Infortune; Les Bourreurs de Crânes; Le Chant de l'Equipage; Les Mystères de la Morgue (in coöperation with F. Carco); La Clique du Café Brebis; Le Fin (souvenirs d'Allemagne); Vanderpett et Napoléon; Le Nègre Léonard et le Maître Jean Miellin; A Bord de L'Étoile Matutine; Bob; La Bête Conquérante; Petit Manuel du Parfait Aventurier; L'Amour et les Saisons.

MACHARD, ALFRED. La Gosse. C. 3.

MARIA STAR. La Fiancée de l'Astral. R. M. 1. 8. 23.

MAURRAS, CHARLES. Born in Martigues (B.-du-R.), April 20, 1868. Author: Jean Moréas; Le Chemin de Paradis; Anthinéa; Les Amants de Venise: George Sand et Musset; Libéralisme et Liberté, démocratie et peuple; Les Chefs socialistes pendant la Guerre; La Blessure Intérieure; Le Conseil de Dante; Mademoiselle Monk.

MILLE, PIERRE. Born in Choisy-le-Roi in 1864. Author: Sur la Vaste Terre; Sous leur Dictée; Caillou et Titi; Paraboles et Diversions; Le Monarque; Naer Eddine et son Epouse; Quand Panurge ressuscita; L'Enfant et la Reine morte; Histoires Exotiques et merveilleuses; La Nuit d'amour sur la Montagne; Trois femmes; L'Ange du Bizarre; Barnavaux; Le Monarque; Les Mémoires d'un dada besogneux de l'armistice à 1925; La Détresse des Harpagons; Hercule et Omphale; La Vérité sur la découverte de l'Amérique; La Victoire et . . . la Retraite; Sacerdos in Æternum.

MIOMANDRE, FRANCIS DE. Born in Tours, 1880. Author: Les Reflets et les Souvenirs; Ecrit sur de l'Eau; Le Vent et la Poussière; L'Ingénu; Mémoires de Gazelle, tortue; Au Bon Soleil; Visages; Figures d'Hier et d'Aujourd'hui; D'Amour et d'Eau Fraîche; L'Aventure de Thérèse Beauchamps; Le Veau d'or et la Vache enragée; Le Greluchon Sentimental.

MONTHERLANT, HENRY DE. La Gloire du Stade. N. R. F. 1. 11. 23.

MORAND, PAUL. Born March 13, 1888. Author: Lampes à Arc; Feuilles de Température; Tendres Stocks; Ouvert la Nuit; Fermé la Nuit; Lewis et Irêne; L'Enfant de 100 ans.

NOAILLES, COMTESSE MATHIEU DE. Born in Paris, November 15, 1876. Author: Le Cœur Innombrable; L'Ombre des Jours (poems); La Nouvelle Espérance; Le Visage Emerveillé; La Domination; De la Rive d'Europeà la Rive d'Asie; Les Vivants et les Morts; Les Eblouissements; Les Forces Eternelles; Les Innocentes; Tragédie Simple.

PEROCHON, ERNEST. Born in 1885. Author: Flûtes et Bourdons; Chansons Alternées; Le Creux des Maisons; Chemin de Plaine; Nêne; Les Ombres; En se dandinant; Les Gardiennes; Sous la Bonne Etoile.

PICARD, GASTON. Born in Paris, January 18, 1892. Author: La Confession du Chat; Le cœur se donne; La bougie bleue; Des dames, des drames et des rames; Le dernier amour de Louise Payran; La danse de l'amour; La frande inquiétude des hommes.

PREVOST, JEAN. Journée du Pugiliste. N. R. F. 1. 3. 24.

QUERCY, JEAN. Les Tribulations de M. Lesourd. R. B. 1. 9. 23.

REGNIER, HENRI DE, de l'Académie Française. Born in Honfleur (Calvados), December 24, 1864. Author: Premiers Poèmes; Poèmes 1887–1892; Les Jeux Rustiques et Divins; La Canne de Jaspe; Le Trèfle Blanc; La Double Maîtresse; Les Médailles d'Argile; Figures et Caractères; Les Amants Singuliers; Le Bon Plaisir; La Cité des Eaux; Le Mariage de Minuit; Les Vacances d'un jeune homme sage; Les Rencontres de M. de Bréot; Le Passé Vivant; La Sandale Ailée; Sujets et Paysages; Esquisses Vénitiennes; L'Amour et le Plaisir; La Peur de l'Amour; Les Scrupules de Sganarelle; Couleur du Temps; Le Miroir des Heures; La Flambée; L'Amphisbène; Contes de France et d'Italie; Portraits et Souvenirs; Le Plateau de Laque; Romaine Mirmault; L'Illusion héroïque de Tito Bassi; Poèmes 1914–1916; Les Petits Messieurs de Nèvres.

ROQUEBRUNE, R. DE, author: Les Habits Rouges; Une Dette de Jeu; La Prime.

ROSNY, J.-H., AINE, author: Nell Horn; L'Aube du Futur; Dans les Rues; La Vague Rouge; La Guerre du Feu; Perdus; Les Trois Rivales; Résurrection; L'Enigme de Givreuse; La Force Mystérieuse; Marthe Baraquin; Les Rafales; Amour Etrusque; Et l'Amour ensuite; La Mort de la Terre; L'Appel du Bonheur; Dans les Etoiles; L'Immolation; Marc Fane; Les Corneilles; Daniel Valgraive; Vamireh; L'Impérieuse Bonté; L'Indomptée; Les Origines; Les Ames Perdues; Une Rupture; La Charpente; L'Héritage; Le Crime du Docteur; Le Docteur Harambur; Thérèse Degaudy; Les Deux Femmes; Une Reine; La Luciole; Le Millionnaire; L'Epave; Le Testament Volé; Le Fardeau; L'Autre Femme; Eyimah; Renouveau; Origines; Le Serment; Un Double Amour; L'Aiguille d'or; Le Chemin d'Amour; Sous le Fardeau; La Toison d'Or; Le Faune; Le Crime de Gramercy Park; Nymphée; Les

Audacieux; Confidences sur l'amitié des tranchées; La force mystérieuse; Le Coffre-Fort; La Fauve; Le Félin Géant; Les Pures et les Impures; Torches et Lumignons; La Haine Surnaturelle; L'Amour d'abord.

Savignon, Andre, author: Le Secret des Eaux; Romanige; Vieille Madame.

Schwob, Marcel. Le Livre de Monelle. CON.

Tharaud, Jerome et Jean. Born in St. Junien (Hte. Vienne), May 11, 1874. Authors: Hommage au Général Charette; La Fête Arabe; La Bataille à Scutari d'Albanie; La Tragédie de Ravaillac; La Mort de Paul Déroulède; L'Ombre de la Croix; Rabat, ou les Heures Marocaines; Une relève; Marakech ou les Seigneurs de l'Atlas; Un royaume de Dieu; La maîtresse servante; Dingley; L'Illustre Ecrivain; La Ville et les Champs; Quand Israël est Roi; La Randonnée de Samba Diouf; Un drame de l'Automne.

Tchapek-Khod. La Promotion de M. Chalvey. R B. 15. 3. 24.

Vaudoyer, J. L. Born in Plessis-Piquet (Seine), September 10, 1883. Author: Les Compagnes du Rêve; L'Amour masqué; La Bien-Aimée; Suzanne et l'Italie; Variations sur les Ballets Russes; La Nuit Persane Le Spectre de la Rose; Propos et Promenades; Les Papiers de Cléonthe; Les permissions de Clément Bellin; La Reine Evanouie; Entre Hier et Demain; Peau d'Ange.

Veber, Pierre. Born in Paris, May 15, 1869. Author: Loute; Ma Fée; L'Aventure; Une Passade; Chez les Snobs; La Joviale Comédie; Les Véber; Les Enfants s'amusent; L'Ami de la Maison; Les Cocches profondes; Amour . . . Amour; Qui Perd Gagne; L'Homme qui vendit son âme au diable; L'Ecole des Ministres; Le Bonheur; Une Aventure de Pompadour; La jolie madame Livran; L'Entremise; Le Théâtre incomplet; Le Rebut d'Humanité.

Vely, Adrien. Born in 1864. Author: English School; Une Lecture; Monsieur Schnitz et Monsieur Schnatz; Les Petites Amies de Monsieur Gratien; Saint Gratien est dans nos murs; Nelson Brown, détective privé . . . de toute intelligence; En voilà des histoires.

Villiers de L'Isle-Adam. Trois nouveaux contes cruels.

Wolff, Pierre. Born in Paris. Author: Les Maris de leurs filles; Les Marionettes; Le Voile déchiré; Les Ailes brisées; Douce Esther; L'Homme qui égara son amour; La Préférée.

Yver, Colette. Born in Segré (Maine-et-Loire), July 28, 1874. Author: La Pension du Sphinx; Les Cervelines; La Bergerie; Comment s'en vont les Reines; Princesses de science; Les Dames du Palais; Le Métier de Roi; Un Coin du Voile; Les Sables Mouvants; Le Mystère des Béatitudes; Mirabelle de Pamelune; Les Cousins riches; L'Homme et le Dieu; La trouvaille de Lord Gardenhope.

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3. Bernard, Jean Jacques. Les Tendresses Menacées.
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6. Cazin, Paul. L'Alouette de Pâques. Plon Nourrit.
7. Chatterji, Tapanmohan. Sous les manguiers. Bossard.
8. Cheneviere, Jacques. Innocences. B. Grasset.
9. Cherau, Gaston. Les Despeloqueros. Plon Nourrit.
10. Colette. La Femme Cachée. Flammarion.
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12. Colette. Chéri. Fayard.
13. Delarue-Mardrus, Lucie. La Cigale. Fayard.
14. Delbousquet, Emmanuel. Contes de la Lande Gasconne. Renaissance du Livre.
15. Doucet, Jerome. La Grande Douleur des sept artistes. Gougy.
16. Durandy, Dominique. Marianne en ballade. G. Crès.
17. Duvernois, Henri. Gisèle. Flammarion.
18. Duvernois, Henri. Morte la Bête. Fayard.
19. Gabory, Georges. Les enfants perdus. Nouvelle Revue Française.
20. Genin, Auguste. Légendes et Récits du Mexique ancien. G.Crès.
21. Geraldy, Paul. Le Prélude. Stock.
22. Girard, Pierre. June Phillippe et l'Amiral. Simon Kra.
23. Guyot et Wegener. Le Livre des Vikings. H. Piazza.
24. Hemon, Louis. La Belle que violà. B. Grasset.
25. Hermant, Abel. L'Excentrique. Lemerre.
26. Herold. La Légende de Nala et Damazanti. H. Piazza.
27. Kessel, J. La Steppe Rouge. Nouvelle Revue Française.
28. Larbaud, Valery. Amants heureux Amants. Nouvelle Revue Française.
29. Lebey, Andre. Ameno Kamato. G. Crès.
30. Lemery, Helene. Enchantements. Monde Nouveau.
31. MacOrlan, Pierre. Malice. G. Crès.
32. Mazon, Andre. Contes Slaves de la Macédoine sud-occidentale. E. Champion.
33. Moreas, Jean. Trois contes d'amour. H. Jonquières Cie.
34. N . . . Histoire d'Ali-Ben-Bekar et de la Belle Schamsennahar. H. Piazza.
35. Noailles, Comtesse Mathieu de. Les Innocentes. Fayard.
36. Pergaud, Louis. La Vie des Bêtes. Mercure de France.
37. Regnier, Henri de. Bonheurs Perdus.
38. Traz, Robert de. Complices. B. Grasset.
39. Vely, Adrien. En Voilà des histoires. J. Ferenczi.
40. Villiers de L'Isle-Adam. Nouveaux Contes Cruels. G. Crès.
41. Wakatsuky, Fukujiro. Légendes japonaises. Desvignes.

ARTICLES ON THE SHORT STORY

JULY, 1923, TO JULY, 1924

The following abbreviations are used in this index.

A.....Æsculape.
A.....Avenir.
A. D.....Art et Decoration.
AF. L.....Afrique Latine.
A. G. G.....Archives de la grande guerre.
A. M.....Annales des Mines.
AN.....Les Annales.
AUT.....L'Automobilia.
A. T. P. B....Annales Travaux publics de Belgique.
B. A.....Beaux Arts.
B. L.....Belles Lettres.
B. S. O. F.....Bulletin de la Société d'oceanographie de France.
B. S. I.....Bibliographie mensuelle des Sciences de l'Industrie.
C. C.....Le Carnet Critique.
C. FR.....Culture Fruitière.
CH. M.....Chronique Médicale.
C. S.....Carnet de la Sabretache.
C.....Candide.
COM.....Comœdia.
C. O.....Correspondance d'Orient.
D.....La Dépêche.
D. A.....Droit d'auteur.
DEB.....Journal des Débats.
D. T.....Documents du travail.
E.....L'Electricien.
ED.....Education.
E. PH.....Education Physique.
E. T.....L'Electro-technicien.
F.....Figaro.
F. N.....La Feuille des Naturalistes.
GA.....Le Gaulois.
G. R.....La Grande Revue.
I. F.....L'Infirmière française.
IL.....L'Illustration.
INT.....Intransigeant.
J. G.....Journal de Genève.
J. M. F.....Journal médical français.
JO. C.....Journal de Caen.
L. D.....Le Divan.
L. de L.....Le livre des livres.
L. L.....Les Lettres.

L. H......Les Humbles.
L. M. I......Larousse mensuelle illustre.
L. T......Le Temps.
M......Les Marges.
M. F......Mercure français.
M. PL......Les Maîtres de la plume.
N. R......La Nouvelle Revue.
N. R. F......Nouvelle revue française.
N. R. CR......Nouvelle revue critique.
OA......Omnia.
O. E......Onde Electrique.
O. M......L'Ouvrier moderne.
O. N......Ordre naturel.
P. M......Paris Médicale.
P. I. M......La pratique des Industries Mécaniques.
Q. E......La quinzaine économique.
R. G. C......Revue générale des colloides.
R. B......Revue Bleue.
R. C. F......Revue général des chemins de fer.
R. G. S. P......Revue général des Sciences pures et appliquées.
R. CR......Revue critique.
R. F......Revue française.
R. FR......République française.
R. J. L. A......Revue juridique inter. de locomotion aérienne.
R. M......Revue Mondiale.
R. 2M......Revue des deux Mondes.
R. C. C......Revue des Cours et Conférences.
R. H......Revue Hebdomadaire.
R. I......Revue des Indépendants.
R. A. L......Revue de l'Amérique latine.
R. P. L. A......Renaissance politique, Littéraire et artistique.
R. R......Radio revue.
R. SQ......Revue scientifique.
R. U......Revue Universelle.
R. ML......Revue Musicale.
R. Q. H......Revue des questions historiques.
R. HQ......Revue Historique.
R. H. F......Revue d'histoire française.
R. S. H......Revue de Synthèse historique.
SO. E......Sud-Ouest économique.
S. M......Sciences modernes.
T. A. A......Technique automobile et aérienne.
T. M......Technique moderne.
T. R......La Table Ronde.
V. A......La vie automobile.
V. A. R......Vie agricole et rurale.
V. P......Vie des peuples.
V. T. I......Vie technique et industrielle.

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LEGUAY, P. Critique et histoire littéraires.
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MAGAZINE AVERAGES

JULY, 1923, TO JULY, 1924

The following table includes the averages of distinctive stories in certain French periodicals published from July, 1923, to July, 1924, inclusive. One, two and three asterisks are employed to indicate relative distinction. "Three-asterisk stories" are of somewhat permanent literary value.

Periodicals	*No. of Stories Published*	*Relative Merit of Stories Published*			*Percentage of Distinctive Stories Published*
		*	**	***	%
Afrique Latine	1	1	0	0	0
Belles Lettres	9	5	3	1	11
Candide	40	12	16	12	30
Contemporains†	15	8	1	6	40
Conteurs Inédits†	6	2	0	4	66
Correspondant	2	0	0	2	100
Demain	6	2	0	4	66
Grande Revue	5	2	2	1	20
Les Humbles	1	0	1	0	0
Illustration	1	0	0	1	100
Lecture Pour Tous	22	10	7	5	22
Les Lettres	5	2	1	2	40
Les Marges	8	5	2	1	12
Mercure de France	2	1	0	1	50
Nouvelles Littéraires	4	3	1	0	0
Nouvelle Revue	3	2	1	0	0
Nouvelle Revue Française	15	10	1	4	27
Œuvres Libres	28	12	5	11	33
Rennaissance Politique, Artistique	7	4	3	0	0
Revue de l'Amérique Latine	6	5	1	0	0
Revue Bleue	13	7	3	3	24
Revue Critique	1	1	0	0	0
Revue des Deux Mondes	3	2	0	1	33
Revue de France	8	3	4	1	12
Revue de Paris	10	3	3	4	40
Revue Hebdomadaire	7	2	4	1	14
Revue Mondiale	6	3	2	1	16
Table Ronde	4	1	2	1	25
Vie des Peuples	1	1	0	0	0

†Small volumes of short stories published at regular intervals.

The following tables indicate the rank, during the period between July, 1923, and July, 1924, inclusive, by number and percentage of distinctive short stories published, of twenty periodicals coming within the scope of my examination which have published an average of ten per cent or more of distinctive stories. The lists exclude reprints, but not translations.

BY PERCENTAGE

1.	Correspondant	100%
2.	Illustration	100%
3.	Demain	66%
4.	Conteurs Inédits	66%
5.	Mercure de France	50%
6.	Revue de Paris	40%
7.	Les Lettres	40%
8.	Les Contemporains	40%
9.	Revue des Deux Mondes	33%
10.	Œuvres Libres	33%
11.	Candide	30%
12.	Nouvelle Revue Française	27%
13.	Table Ronde	25%
14.	Revue Bleue	24%
15.	Lectures Pour Tous	22%
16.	Grande Revue	20%
17.	Revue Mondiale	16%
18.	Revue Hebdomadaire	14%
19.	Les Marges	12%
20.	Belles Lettres	11%

BY NUMBER

1.	Candide	12
2.	Œuvres Libres	11
3.	Contemporains	6
4.	Lectures Pour Tous	5
5.	Revue de Paris	4
6.	Conteurs Inédits	4
7.	Demain	4
8.	Nouvelle Revue Française	4
9.	Revue Bleue	3
10.	Correspondant	2
11.	Les Lettres	2
12.	Belles Lettres	1
13.	Grande Revue	1
14.	Illustration	1
15.	Les Marges	1
16.	Mercure de France	1
17.	Revue des Deux Mondes	1
18.	Revue de France	1
19.	Revue Mondiale	1
20.	Table Ronde	1

INDEX OF SHORT STORIES PUBLISHED IN FRENCH MAGAZINES

JULY, 1923, TO JULY, 1924

All short stories published in the following magazines and newspapers are indexed, for which the following abbreviations are employed:

B. L......Belles Lettres.
C......Candide.
C. I......Conteurs Inédits.
CO......Correspondant.
CON......Contemporains.
D......Demain.
G. R......Grande Revue.
IL......Illustration.
L. H......Les Humbles.
L.L......Les Lettres.
M......Les Marges.
M. F......Mercure de France.
N. L......Nouvelles Littéraires.
N. R......Nouvelle Revue.
O. L......Œuvres Libres.
R. P. L. A......Revue Politique, Littéraire, Artistique.
R. A. L......Revue de l'Amérique Latine.
R. B......Revue Bleue.
R. 2M......Revue des Deux Mondes.
R. F......Revue de France.
R. M......Revue Mondiale.
R. P......Revue de Paris.
T. R......Table Ronde.
V. P......Vie des Peuples.

The following periodicals have published during the same period three or more "two-asterisk stories."

Candide	16
Lectures Pour Tous	7
Œuvres Libres	5
Revue de France	4
Revue Hebdomadaire	4
Belles Lettres	3
Renaissance P. L. A.	3
Revue Bleue	3
Revue de Paris	3

Ties in the above lists have been decided by taking relative rank in other lists into account.

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***Adam, Paul. Vers Dieu, pages inédites. B. L. 1. 24.
**Ades, Albert, Les Deux Avares, G. R. 6. 23.
*Alexinsky, Tatiana, Souvenirs d'Une Socaliste Russe, G. R. 11. 23.
*Aveline, Claude, Rêves Sur Quelques Jouets Ou La Nuit De Nöel, R. CR. 25. 1. 24.
**Aveline, Claude, L'Eau Ruisselle De Toute Parts (L'Homme Phalère II). L. H. 2. 24.
*Arnoux, A. Sextuor, N. L. 29. 12. 23.
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***Bazin, Rene, Conte de Triolet, R. 2M. 15. 9. 23.
*Bachelin, H., Le Péché de la Vierge. M. F. 1. 9. 23.
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*Bailly, Auguste, Eros, Invincible Eros, C. 8.
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*Barriere, Marcel, Le mauvais Eros, O. L. 12. 23.
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***Bec, Lucien, Sauveur II, G. R. 6. 23.
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**Beraud, Henri, Lazare, R. F. 15. 1. 24
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*Bernhardt - Verneuil, L., Mentir, N. R. 1. 8. 23.
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*Berthault, Francois, La Joueuse Et l'Enfant Tragique, B. L. 1. 8. 23.
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***Blasco, Ibanez, Le Roi des Prairies, O. L. 1. 29.
***Bonnard, Abel, R. P. 15. 4. 24.
*Bopp, Leon, Jean Darien, N. R. F. 1. 5. 24.
***Bordeaux, Henry, Sports, L.P.T. 11. 23.
**Bordeaux, Henry, L'Enfant Aux Deux Mères, C. 8.
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*Bouchardon, P., M. Lacenaire, Assassin, Poète et Chansonnier, L. P.T. 7. 23.
***Boulenger, Marcel, L'Enfant Prodigue, O. L. 11. 23.
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*Cleuziere, Marthe, R. B. 4. 8. 23.
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*Derys, Le Maigre Magnifique, R. P. L. A. 5. 4. 24.
**Deutsch, Leon, Le coup de vent, O. L. 1. 24.
*Diaz-Rodriguez, Les Raisins du Tropique, R. A. L. 1. 10. 23.
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***Duman, Renee, Karbin au Karakho, T. R. 2. 24.
**Duman, Rene, Mars 1918, T. R. 4. 24.
*Duvernois, Henri, Le revenant, O. L. 4. 24.
*Duvernois, Henri, Servante, O. L. 1. 24.
**Duvernois, Henri, Toto, C. 20. 3. 24.
**Duvernois, Henri, La Leçon Inutile, C. 4.

F

***Farrere, Claude, Damoclès, C. 27. 3. 24.
***Farrere, Claude, L'An 1937, O. L. 2. 24.
**Fayard, Jean, Oxford et Margaret, R. F. 25. 10. 23.
*Faure, Elie, Les Constructeurs, CON.
*Forges, Lucien, Dans la Main de Fer des Tsars Rouges, B. L. 10. 23.
**Francis, Jose, Une Nuit, C. 14.
***Frapie, Leon, La Manifestante, C. I.

G

*Garcia-Monge, J., Le Mauvais Sort, R. A. L. 1. 9. 23.
*Gaument et Ce., L'Enfant Passionne, R. B. 1. 7. 23.
**Gaumont, Jean, La Couronne de Roses, B. L. 6. 24.
*Geniaux, Ch., Les Faucons, R. 2M. 1. 7. 23.
***Geraldy, Paul, Le Prélude, R. P. 15. 11. 23.
*Gerard-Gailly, Le Divorce des Blainthys, R. M. 1. 12. 23.
*Germain-Flandre, J., Celle qui pleurait, C. 2.
***Gide, Andre, La Tentative Amoureuse, CON.
***Giraudoux, Jean, Juliette au Pays des Hommes, R. P. 1. 5. 24.
*Giraudoux, Jean, Visite chez le prince, N. R. F. 1. 10. 23.
**Giraudoux, Jean, La Pharmacienne, CON.
**Gizycka, Eleonor, André en Amérique, R. P. 15. 8. 23.
*Gluck, E. G., Le Collet d'Hermine, L. P. T. 9. 23.
*Goichon, Alexandre, Le Dolmen, B. L. 6. 24.
***Gorki, Maxime, Strasti Mordasti, O. L. 4. 23.
*Gourmont, Remy de, Monsieur Croquant, CON.
**Guiesse, Les Mèches Blanches, G. R. 11. 23.
**Guignard, Alfred, L'Hilote, R. F. 1. 8. 23.
***Guitet-Vauquelin, Pierre, La Passion Aragonaise, O. L. 9. 23.

H

*Harrys, Myriam, La Barque d'Or du Dieu Amon, L. P. T. 1. 6. 23.
*Hellens, Franz, Le Joueur de Vide, N. L. 21. 6. 24.
***Henriot, Philippe, La Lettre Egarée, L. L. 10. 4. 24.
*Hesse, H., Sidharina, V. P. 10. 4. 24.
**Hispano, Cornelio, En Remontant l'Amazone, R. A. L. 1. 5. 24.
**Hirsch, Charles Henry, Nicolas Florinette, C. 12.
***Hirsch, Charles Henry, Le Silencieux, C. 6.
*d'Houville, Gerard, Le Paradis à l'Ombre des Epées, C. 10.
***Huet, Maurice, Amour et Alésage, O. L. 6. 24.

I

*Ivanov, Vsevolod, L'Enfant, O. L. 4. 24.

J

**Jacqueline, La Jeune Fille Très Sport, L. P. T. 6. 24.
*Jacqueline, Ce que lisent les Jeunes Filles, L. P. T. 4. 24.
*Jacqueline, Le Langage à la mode, L. P. T., 15. 24.
*Jacqueline, Lettres à Nicole, signe des Temps, L. P. T. 15. 24.
***Jacqueline, La Femme Supérieure, L. P. T. 7. 24.
*Jacob, Max, Le Cornet à Dés, CON.
***Jaloux, Edmond, La Fugitive, C. 3.
*Jean, Albert, Dormir, C. 3.
**Jouhandeau, Marcel, La Chèvre d'Ivoire, N. L. 24. 5. 24.
*Jouhandeau, Marcel, La Bergerè Nanon, N. R. F. 1. 2. 24.

***Jouhandeau, Marcel, Noémie Bodeau ou la Morte Maquillée, M. 15. 7. 23.

L

*Lacour, Paul, Le Sacrifice, R. B. 3. 5. 23.
***Lacretelle, Jacques de, Une Belle Journée, O. L. 8. 23.
**Landeau, Maurice, Un mot de poète, B. L. 1. 11. 23.
***Lapaire, Hughes, La Treille en fleur, I. L. 29. 9. 23.
***Larvaud, Valery, Mon Plus Secret Conseil, N. R. F. 1. 9. 23.
*Larguier, Leo, La Journée d'un Célibataire, O. L. 3. 24.
*Larguier, Leo, En Carafe, C. 8.
**La Touche, F. de, Repos Hebdomadaire, L. P. T. 1. 5. 24.
***Lavedan, Henri, L'Ane de Sainte Austreberte, CO. 15. 12. 23
*Lecomte, G., Rêves de Jeunes Filles, R. A. L. 1. 11. 23.
***Leouzon, Le Duc, Demain, D. 6. 24.
*Level, Maurice, Mme. Lafarge, C. 7.
*Lenormand, H. R., Fidélité, O.L. 12.23.
*Lhote, Andre, L'utilisation plastique au coup de foudre, N. R. F. 1. 3. 24.
***Lichtenberger, Andre, Un Pauvre Homme, C. 1.
***Lombroso, Gina, Gilda, R. P. 15. 2. 24.
**Lera, C. A., Le Fong-Choué, R. M. 15. 5. 24.
***Louis, Leon Martin, La Mauvaise Aubaine, C. 9.

M

*M. V., Sur la Plage, R.P.L.A. 28. 7. 23.
*M. V., Histoires Touchantes et Merveilleuses, R.P.L.A. 15. 7. 23.
***Machard, Alfred, La Gosse, C. 3.
*Mazaud, Emile, Le Calvaire d'Eustache Métier, C. 11.
**Maria Star, La Fiancée de l'Astral, R. M. 1. 8. 23.
*Maurras, Charles, Mademoiselle Monk, CON.
*Mauriere, Gabriel, La Patronne, R. B. 16. 2. 24.
**Maurois, Andre, Par la faute de M. de Balzac, N. R. F. 1. 8. 24.
*Merlet, Louis, Caranaval ne t'en va pas, R. P. L. A. 1. 3. 24.
*Mille, Pierre, Hercule et Omphale, L. P. T. 7. 23.
**Mille, Pierre, La Vérité sur la Découverte de l'Amérique, L. P.T. 9. 23.
***Mille, Pierre, La Victoire et . . . La Retraite, O. L. 1. 24.
*Mille, Pierre, Sacerdos In Æternum, O. L. 7. 23.
*Millet, Marcel, La Chêvre, M. 15. 12. 24.
*Montherlant, Henry de, La Gloire du Stade, N. R. F. 1. 11. 24.
***Montherlant, Henry de, Mademoiselle de Plémeur championne du "Trois Cents." R. H. 10. 11. 23.
**Montherlant, Henry de, Les Amants Olympiques, C. 12.
***Morand, Paul, L'Enfant de 100 ans, C. I.

N

*Naoum, Le Porteur d'Eau, L.P.T. 9. 23.
**Nancy, George, Femmes au Hamman, M. 15. 1. 24.
*Nicolas Nikitine, Le Mâtin, O. L. 4. 24.
*Noailles, Comtesse de, Tragédie Simple, D. 6. 24.

O

**Olivaint, Maurice, L'Evadé, N. R. 1. 1. 24.
*Olivier, Paul, L'Ecouteuse de Morts, O. L. 3. 24.
*Oudard, Georges, Bal Masqué, C. 5.

P

**Panzini, Alfredo, Les Huitres de Saint Damien, R. B. 7. 6. 24.
*Paolieri, Ferdiando, Le Confident, R. B. 20. 10. 23.
*Pepinster, E., La Curieuse Voiture Sizaire Frères.
***Perochon, Ernest, En se dandinant, O. L. 3. 24.
*Perochon, Ernest, Les Gardiennes, R. F. 1. 12. 23.
***Perochon, Ernest, Sous la Bonne Etoile, D. 5. 24.
*Philipar, Georges, Calme du soir (Impressions du Temps de guerre), R. B. 1. 12. 23.
***Picard, Gaston, La Danse de l'Amour, C. I. 1. 24.
*Picard, Gaston, Arthur et Sophie.
***Pilniak, Boris, Bielokonskoïe, O. L. 4. 24.
*Pillement, G., Virginie, M. 15. 5. 24.
***Prevost, Jean, Journee du Pugiliste, N. R. F. 1. 3. 24.
*Puaux, Rene, Cypris Victorieuse, O. L. 8. 23.

Q

***Quercy, Jean, Les tribulations de M. Lesourd, R. B. 1. 9. 23.

R

*Reboux, Paul, Elles et Lui, C. I. 1. 24.
**Reboux, Paul, Trio, O. L. 4. 24.
***Regnier, Henri de, Les Petits Messieurs de Nèvres, CON.
*Regnier, Paul, L'Agonie dans la Forêt, R. H. 19. 4. 24.
*Reyes, Alfonso, Le Repas, R. A. L. 1. 4. 24.
*Riciotto-Canudo, L'Escalier des Sept Femmes, R. M. 15. 2. 24.
**Rhais, Elissa, La Fille du Douar, R. P. 15. 2. 24.
**Robin, Gil, Les Cheveux de Cérès, N. R. F. 1. 7. 23.

*Robin, Gil, Les Jardins de la Villa Lliteia, N. R. F. 1. 5. 24.
*Roghen, Andre, A Propos de Mme. Sans Gêne. T. R. 1. 24.
**Roquebrune, R. de, Une dette de jeu, L. P. T.
*Roquebrune, R. de, La Prime (conte canadien), L. P. T. 1. 8. 23.
***Rosny, Aine, J. H., La Haine Surnaturelle, R. B. 17. 11. 23.
*Rosny, Aine, J. H., L'Amour d'Abord, R. F. 1. 9. 23.
**Roure, Remy, L'Ame du Vivarais, R.P.L.A. 28. 7. 23.

S

**Saint-Jean, Robert de, La Journée rhénane, R. H. 8. 3. 24.
*Saintonge, Le Cai, Légende guarani, R. A. L. 1. 12. 23.
***Salmon, Andre, Le Manuscrit trouvé dans un chapeau, CON.
***Savignon, Andre, Romanige, L. P.T. 2. 24.
*Savignon, Andre, Vieille Madame, O. L. 2. 24.
*Schure, Edouard, La Légende de Merlin l'Enchanteur, R. M. 1. 1. 24.
***Schwob, Marcel, Le Livre de Monelle, CON.
*Schlumberger, Jean, Le Lion Devenu Vieux, R. P. 6. 24.
**Sindral, Jacques, Amour sans Force, N. R. F. 1. 24.
*Songy, Le Beau Jardin, R. 2M. 15. 7. 23.
*Suares, Andre, Voici l'homme, CON.

T

***Tchapek-Khod, La Promotion de M. Chalvey, R. B. 15. 3. 24.
***Tharaud, J. and J., Un Drame de l'Automne, CON.
*Thomas, Louis, Carlotta, M. 15. 10. 23.

U

**Ugarte, M., Le Sergent Lynch, R. B. 6. 10. 23.

V

*Valdagne, Pierre, Les Affaires et les Femmes. C. 10.
**Valle Inclan, Sonate de printemps, R. F. 1. 8. 23.
**Vaudoyer, Jean Louis, Entre Hier et Demain, R. H. 20. 10. 23.
*Vaudoyer, Jean Louis, Peau d'Ange, R. P. 13. 11. 23.
**Verne, Henri, Les Conductrices, R. P. L. A. 8. 3. 24.
**Veber, Pierre, Le Rebut d'Humanité, O. L. 11. 23.
*Villetard, Pierre, Ma Cousine, Edna. C. 6.
**Villetard, Pierre, Chonchita, C.
**Vimereu, Paul, Une Balle Perdue, M. 15. 1. 24.
**Viollis, Jean, Souvenirs d'enfance, Le Rabot de St. Joseph, R. B. 15. 12. 23.
*Viollis, Jean, Souvenirs d'enfance, La Journée d'Hiver, R. B. 17. 11. 23.
*Voisins, Gilbert de, Le Jour Naissant, R. P. 15. 9. 23.

W

***Wolf, Pierre, Douce Esther, M. F. 1. 9. 23.
**Wolf, Pierre, L'Homme qui égara son amour, B. L. 4. 24.
*Wolf, Pierre, La Préférée. C. 8.

Y

***Yver, Colette, La trouvaille de Lord Gardenhope, L.P.T. 12. 23.

Z

*Zorilla, Jose, A bon juge, témoin meilleur, N. R. 1. 2. 24.

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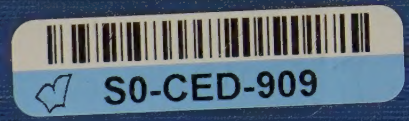
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